BARNES' NOTES

Notes on the Old Testament

Albert Barnes

PSALMS
Volume 1

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE PSALMS have ever been held in the highest appreciation by the Church. We are familiar with the testimonies of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin to the excellence of the Psalms. We know that the piety of the Church has been fed by the Psalms for thousands of years; that they have come singing down through the ages, sustaining the sufferers, and inspiring the heroes of every time. It is a good sign of our times that these precious songs of Zion are attracting more attention amongst us, and that not only on the part of men whose professional duties may be supposed to demand it, but also from men occupying the highest place in literature and politics. The Christian public, not long ago, were surprised and delighted when informed that our great Prime Minister had been whiling away some dreary hours in the House of Commons last session by translating into Greek Toplady's beautiful hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." We think many will be equally delighted with the following beautiful testimony to the Psalms of David on the part of Mr. Gladstone. He says—"In that book, for well nigh three thousand years, the piety of saints has found its most refined and choicest food, to such a degree, indeed, that the rank and quality of the religious frame may in general be tested, at least negatively, by the height of its relish for them. There is the whole music of the human heart, when touched by the hand of the Maker, in all its tones that whisper or that swell, for every hope and fear, for every joy and pang, for every form of strength and languor, of disquietude and rest. There are developed all the innermost relations of the human soul to God, built upon the platform of a covenant of love and sonship, that had its foundations in the Messiah, while, in this particular and privileged book, it was permitted to anticipate his coming." It is reassuring, in these rationalistic times, to meet in such quarters

with so profound a reverence for the Divine Word, and so keen a relish for its beauty, and appreciation of its spiritual power. At the same time, Commentaries on the Psalms and Introductions have greatly multiplied among us of late. For a long time we had almost nothing in our language on this deeply interesting portion of Scripture but the work of Bishop Horne, of the excellence of which, in a purely practical and devotional point of view, it would be impossible to speak too highly; but something was needed that would go deeper down and bring up the precious gems that lay in the hidden depths of the Psalter. We do not forget Bishop Horsley, Professor Bush, and others, or the earlier writers from which Mr. Spurgeon has drawn so largely in his recent work. Yet of really good expositions of the Psalms the number was very small. But now we have Plumer, Perowne, Alexander, M'Michael (on the Pilgrim Psalms), Binnie, Bonar, Spurgeon, and BARNES, with many more on the whole or on detached portions of the book.

The works now named are all of them of high excellence. In Mr. Barnes' three volumes the reader will find the same thorough and painstaking research, the same fulness, the same delightful perspicuity, the same beauty and practical power, that characterized his previous works, and have given them so extended popularity both in this country and in America. Our author sat down to his work on the Psalms with a full conviction of the difficulty of the task, and full knowledge of the peculiar and varied qualifications requisite to enable one to produce a satisfying exposition of this portion of the Word of God. He himself states these qualifications well. Among them he enumerates, after noticing the necessity of Hebrew and other learning, the possession of the imaginative faculty in such strength as will give sympathy with the poetic spirit of the Psalms; and also, and not least, the possession of the devotional element, with deep and long experience of the life of godliness, to enable the expositor to sympathize with the varied feelings and frames of the sanctified heart. The better half of the Psalms must ever remain a sealed book to the unsanctified expositor, however learned or qualified in other respects. Mr. Barnes has risen to a higher level here than many who have trodden in the same path before. Piety and practical experience of Divine things are often prominent, and are never awanting, and rest always on a basis of sound criticism and sober

expository judgment. It is this union of the practical and critical element, in just proportion, that constitutes the distinguishing excellence of our author's exposition, and entitles it, we think, to rank among the best, if not to be regarded as indeed the best Commentary on the Psalms, that has yet appeared in our language. The work has also this peculiar feature of interest, that it is the last which, in all probability, the author will issue. His growing weakness of sight, and the infirmities of advancing years, have disposed, if not compelled, him to lay down his pen; and his many labours on the Word of God have found a fitting close in these notes and meditations on a book which furnishes the sweetest music for the soul in the evening of life, and the best preparation for the eternal rest. It is well to cease from the labours of life, and fall asleep with the harp of David making grave sweet melody in one's ears all the way down through the valley of age and the valley of death, to be lost only in the higher melody of angelic harps before the throne.

It remains only to state the peculiarities of this edition. The text has been subjected to careful revision. The reader will not find additional and corrective notes as in the volumes previously edited by us. The reason is twofold. First, the Author's views have been somewhat modified, and his theology has mellowed and ripened with years. Even in those passages where the old peculiarities appear, there is less angularity and more careful and guarded language. We have been particularly struck with the sound and clear views generally expressed on the principles which regulate the interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, as quoted and appealed to in the New. The principle of accommodation finds little countenance at the hands of our Author. The Messianic Psalms, too, are interpreted in a way that leaves nothing to be desired. The second reason is, that a mere reference to the additional notes, when required, seemed all that was necessary for readers already in possession of the previous volumes of our edition of Barnes.

In the *Appendix*, however, will be found very many and valuable additional notes, in the form of brief extracts, from the best writers and commentators on the Psalms. These extracts have been selected with care, and on the principle of exhibiting the scope of the Psalm, giving special attention to the Messianic Psalms, and of presenting throughout only such things as appeared to us to approach to the

character of gems in psalm literature, or at all events to have some special excellence entitling them to be placed under the reader's eye. The works we have mainly used for this purpose are—Hengstenberg, Delitzsch (of which the proof-sheets of the English translation were kindly furnished by Messrs. Clark of Edinburgh), Plumer, Kitto, Thrupp, Perowne, Alexander, Bonar, Calvin, Luther, Horne, Binnie, and Spurgeon. The name of the author in every instance is given along with the extract from his work. The selection is confined within a limited range, and is also in itself limited. The space at our command did not admit of more, and the limitation will perhaps be less regretted if the selection shall be found to be judicious.

Altogether it is believed that these volumes will be found fitting companions for the numerous volumes already issued of Blackie's Edition of the Expository Works of ALBERT BARNES. The Notes on the Psalms, it should be observed, have a close connection with those on Isaiah and Daniel, and form, besides, the necessary complement of the Exposition on the New Testament. The quotations from the Psalms are so abundant in the New Testament, that the author's views on some of the most important passages of Scripture can only be fully obtained by a comparison of the Notes on both places. In a word, the Notes on the Old Testament and on the New are mutually illustrative of one another.

R. F.

PREFACE

THESE Notes on the Book of Psalms complete my labours in endeavouring to explain and illustrate the sacred Scriptures. At my time of life—with the partial failure of vision with which I have been afflicted for more than twelve years—with the other cares and burdens resting on me—and with the moral certainty that the infirmities of age, if I am spared, must soon come upon me, I could hope to accomplish no more; and I shall attempt no more.

These Notes were commenced more than twelve years ago, and were undertaken in pursuance of a desire long cherished. For this work I had been making preparation for several years previous by the collection of such Commentaries on the Psalms as I could obtain, that might assist me in preparing something on this portion of the Sacred Volume that might at once be useful to others, and might make it my duty and privilege, in this the closing labour of my life, in this department, to contemplate the beauties of this book by a close study—an employment than which none could be more appropriate for one who looks at the end of all his earthly labours as rapidly approaching.

The work has been prosecuted with such leisure as I could command—the whole of it having been written, as all my other Commentaries have been, in the early hours of the morning, uniformly closing my daily task in this respect as the hour of nine was reached. By this arrangement I have secured the time which I have employed in preparing the Notes on the New Testament, on Job, on Isaiah, on Daniel, and now on the Psalms, without entrenching on what I felt might properly be required of me in my pastoral labours; and, at the same time, I have secured to myself personally the inestimable benefit of commencing each day with the contemplation of a portion of the Word of God.

In the long period which has elapsed since these Notes on the Psalms were commenced, I have been frequently compelled to interrupt my studies by the condition of my eyes; and, in more than one

instance, the work has been wholly suspended for more than a year at a time, with little hope that it would be resumed again. Some apology, I trust, may be found in these facts for the manifold defects which I have too much reason to suppose will be observed by all who consult these volumes. I have performed my work as well as I could; but I have not accomplished my own cherished hopes in regard to it. It is not what I fondly trusted it might be; it is not what a work on the Psalms should be. Some of the reasons for the failure I have stated at length in the Introduction, § 8.

It is of more interest to me than it can be to the public to say that I cannot close these labours, continued through so many years of my life, without deep emotion. The very fact that *any* work of life is ended, however humble or unimportant it may be in itself, is fitted to suggest solemn reflections to a man's own mind. The nature of the work in which I have thus been engaged is such as to give great additional solemnity to these reflections. He undertakes a work of great responsibility, who engages in the task of endeavouring to explain the Word of God, and who may thus give direction to the views, perhaps, of thousands, on subjects that may affect their destiny for ever.

In looking, now, at a labour of this kind continued for nearly forty years, and entered on with no expectation of the results which have been reached, while I am grateful for the patronage extended to my efforts in this country and abroad, I cannot be insensible to the responsibility of having in that time sent forth to influence my fellow-men more than half a million of volumes of Commentary on the Scriptures in my native land, and perhaps more than this number in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and of having been permitted, to a limited extent at least, thus to speak in the French and Welsh languages, in the languages of India, and in the language spoken by the millions of China.

With such feelings of gratitude, and with, I trust, some proper sense of my responsibility, I now close this part of the labour of my life, and commend these volumes, as I have endeavoured to do those which have gone before them, to the blessing of God.

ALBERT BARNES.

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. *The title to the Book of Psalms.*—The general title to the Book of Psalms in Hebrew is תְּהִלִּים—*Tehillim*, Psalms, or more fully, סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים—*Sepher Tehillim*, "Book of Psalms." Sometimes a shorter title is used—תִּלִּים—*Tillim*. Other terms are used as appropriate to particular psalms, as מִזְמֹרִים—*mizmorim*, or שִׁירִים, *shirim*, songs; or in the singular, מִזְמוֹר, *mizmor*, and שִׁיר, *shir*, a song. These latter titles, however, are not given to the entire collection, but to particular psalms. The former title—*mizmor*—is given to Ps. iii., iv., v., vi., viii., ix., xii., xiii., xv., xix., xx., xxi., xxii., xxiii., and to thirty-nine others, the last being Ps. cxliii., rendered uniformly *a psalm*. The latter title, *shir*, occurs in Ps. xxx., xlv., xlvi., and in twenty-seven other psalms, the last being Ps. cxxxiv., and is uniformly rendered *song*, though it is sometimes connected with the word *mizmor*, psalm, and rendered "A song and psalm," as in Ps. xlviii., lxv., lxvi., lxvii., lxviii., lxxv., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii.; and in Ps. cxxii., cxxiii., cxxiv. it is connected with the word *degrees*: "*A song of degrees.*"

The word *Tehillim* is derived from the verb—הָלַל—*halal*, to praise, as in the word *Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah*. The name is given to the general collection, because praise, more than any one thing else, is the characteristic of the book, and because the collection seems to have been designed to be used in the public praise or worship of God. Probably they were all thus used in Hebrew worship.

The word *Psalms*, as applied to the collection, we have derived from the Greek translation, the word ψαλμὸς, in the plural ψαλμοὶ—*psalmos*, and *psalmoi*. This word is derived from ψάλλω, *psallo*, to touch, to twitch, to pluck—as the hair or beard; and then, to touch or twitch a string, *to twang*, that is, to cause it to vibrate by touching or twitching it with the finger or with a *plectrum* (πλῆκτρον)—an instrument for striking the strings of a lyre, as a quill. Cic. N. D., 2. 59. Hence the word is applied to instruments of music employed in praise, and then to acts of praise in general. The noun—ψαλμός, *psalmos*—*psalm*,

means properly *a touching, twang,* as of a bowstring, or of stringed instruments; then a song, as accompanying stringed instruments; and then specifically a psalm or song of praise to God. Thus the verb—ψαλλω, *psallo*—is used in the New Testament as denoting *praise* in the following places:—Rom. xv. 9, "I will confess—and *sing* unto Thy name;" 1 Cor. xiv. 15, "*I will sing* with the spirit, and *I will sing* with the understanding;" Eph. v. 19, "Singing and *making melody* in your heart to the Lord;" James v. 13, "Is any merry? let him *sing psalms.*" The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The *noun*—ψαλμός, *psalmos*—is used in the New Testament in the following places as denoting psalms in general:—1 Cor. xiv. 26, "Every one of you hath a *psalm*;" Eph. v. 19, "Speaking to yourselves in *psalms*;" Col. iii. 16, "Admonishing one another in *psalms.*" In the following places it is applied in the New Testament to the Book of Psalms, considered as a collection of songs of praise;—Luke xx. 42, "David himself saith in the Book of *Psalms*;"—Luke xxiv. 44, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the *Psalms*, concerning me:" see Notes on that passage;—Acts i. 20, "It is written in the Book of *Psalms*;"—Acts xiii. 33, "It is also written in the second *psalm.*" The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

§ 2. *The authors of the psalms.*—The Psalms thus collected into a book are by no means the production of one poet or one age. They stretch through a long period of Jewish history, certainly from the time of Moses to the time of the return from the captivity of Babylon, and probably later, and they are modified by all the varieties incident to the peculiarities of their respective authors; to individual and national history; to the times in which they were composed. So many of them, however, are the composition of David, that it is customary to speak of them as "The Psalms of David," though it is probable that not much more than half of the psalms in the collection were written by him. Of the one hundred and fifty comprising the collection, according to the enumeration in the Hebrew manuscripts, not quite one half are usually ascribed to him. According to De Wette, seventy-four; to Kennicott, sixty-six; to De Rossi, sixty-seven; to Rosenmüller and Eichhorn, seventy-one; and to Hengstenberg, eighty. It is probable, however, that a portion of the psalms to which no name is prefixed in the title—but how great a portion it is impossible now to determine—is the production of David. Still, so many are known to have been composed by him, and he was so eminent as a poet, as to justify the language which is so frequently employed when they are called familiarly "The Psalms of David."

The following persons are mentioned in the titles as authors of psalms:

(1.) One psalm (xc.) is ascribed to Moses. In regard to the question whether this is to be regarded as a composition of Moses, see Notes on the psalm. No other psalm in the collection is ascribed to him, though not a few specimens of his poetry are preserved in the Pentateuch. Why this was not incorporated with his other writings, or how it was preserved until it obtained a permanent place in the Book of Psalms, cannot now be determined.

(2.) David occupies a prominent position as the author of many of the psalms in the collection, but, as has been remarked above, critics are divided in opinion as to the exact number that should be ascribed to him. In the Hebrew inscriptions of the Psalms, sixty-eight are attributed to him. The difference between this number and that noted above in regard to the opinions of De Wette, Kennicott, De Rossi, Rosenmüller, Eichhorn, Hengstenberg, and others, arises from the variations in the manuscripts in respect to these inscriptions; the different value attached to these inscriptions by various critics; the fact that some psalms, though without a title in the Hebrew, are supposed to be so certainly the production of David as to make it proper to ascribe them to him; and the fact that some of the psalms ascribed to him are supposed by different writers to belong to a later period of the Jewish history than his time, and that consequently the title by which they are attributed to David is an error. There *is* every reason to suppose that some of the psalms now without a title are the composition of David, though it is not known, and cannot now be known, why they are *not* ascribed to him in the titles of the psalms themselves. In consequence of these facts, it is impossible now to determine with exact precision how many of the psalms are to be ascribed to David; though the number is undoubtedly so great that he is to be regarded as the principal author of the collection.

(3.) Twelve of the psalms, Ps. l., lxxiii., lxxiv., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxvii., lxxviii., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxi., lxxxii., lxxxiii., are ascribed to Asaph. These, it will be seen, occupy a place together in the collection, (Ps. lxiii. —lxxxiii.,) with the exception of Ps. l. The reason for this arrangement cannot now be known. De Wette (Einleitung, III. iii.) supposes that, with the exception of Ps. l. and lxxiii., these are improperly ascribed to Asaph, as, in his view, they pertain to later times of the Jewish history, Ps. lxxiv. and lxxix. to the destruction of the temple and the city; Ps. lxxx. to the Exile, etc. Comp. the Notes on the introduction to those psalms.

(4.) Eleven of the psalms, xlii., xliv., xlv., xlvi., xlvii., xlviii., xlix., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., are ascribed to "the sons of Korah," as

the authors, or are "for the sons of Korah." See Notes to the introduction of Ps. xlii. It is not certain whether these were composed *by* "the sons of Korah," or were composed *for* "the sons of Korah;" that is, for the company of musicians to whom the direction of the music in the temple was confided. It is obvious, however, that if the meaning is that they were composed *by* "the sons of Korah," this furnishes no information as to the individual authorship of the psalms. By which *one* of them they were composed, or whether by *more* than one, of course is not indicated by a title so general. De Wette supposes that most of these psalms pertain to the times of the Exile, or to a later period. There is nothing *very* peculiar in the character of these psalms; nothing which in themselves could lead us to conclude that they were composed by those to whom they are ascribed, rather than by David or Asaph.

(5.) Two psalms, lxxxviii., lxxxix., are ascribed to a person called "The Ezrahite." One of these, Ps. lxxxviii., is ascribed to "*Heman* the Ezrahite," and the other, Ps. lxxxix., to *Ethan* the Ezrahite." The former of these is also reckoned among those which pertain to the "sons of Korah." Ethan and Heman were probably, however, different persons, to each of whom the name *Ezrahite* might for some reason be applied. In 1 Kings iv. 31, they are mentioned among others as remarkable for their wisdom: "For he [Solomon] was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol." In 1 Chron. ii. 6, they are mentioned as "sons of Zerah:" "Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara." In 1 Chron. vi. 33, a Heman is mentioned as one of the "sons of the Kohathites:" "Heman, a singer, the son of Joel." So, in 1 Chron. xv. 17, he is mentioned in connexion with Ethan, who is there said to be the son of Kushaiah; and in 1 Chron. xv. 19, he is mentioned as associated with Asaph and Ethan: "So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass." In 1 Chron. xxv. 1, Heman is mentioned with Jeduthun, as one of those whose sons "should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals." He is there referred to as associated with Asaph. Comp. 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 13, 14; xxxv. 15. Ethan is twice mentioned—1 Kings iv. 31 as above, as a wise man, and 1 Chron. ii. 6, as above. Compare Notes on the introduction to Ps. lxxxviii., lxxxix.

(6.) Two of the psalms, Ps. lxxii. and Ps. cxxvii., are ascribed to Solomon, or are "*for* Solomon." See the Notes on the titles to those psalms. It cannot be positively determined whether those psalms are his composition, or whether they were composed with reference to him or "*for*" him. The latter would seem to be the more probable opinion in regard to Ps. lxxii., so far as can be determined from the

contents of the psalm; but still there is nothing which absolutely prevents us from ascribing the two to him as the author.

(7.) Fifteen of the psalms, Ps. cxx.—cxxxiv., are entitled "Songs of Degrees." Of these, four are ascribed to David and one to Solomon. The names of the authors of the others are not mentioned. Comp. the introduction to the Notes on Ps. cxx. They are grouped together because they appear to have been used on certain special occasions, rather than from anything peculiar in the psalms themselves.

(8.) Some of the psalms are ascribed in the Septuagint translation to Jeremiah, to Ezekiel, to Haggai, and to Zechariah. As there is nothing corresponding to this in the Hebrew titles, this must have been, of course, mere conjecture or tradition.

(9.) There remains a pretty large number of the collection the names of whose authors are not mentioned; and, of course, there are now no means of determining the question in regard to the authorship. Such are Ps. i., ii., x., xxxiii., xliii., lxxi., xcii., xciii., xciv., xcv., xcvi., xcvii., xcviii., xcix., c., civ., cv., cvi., cvii., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxiv., cxv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., cxix., cxxxv., cxxxvi., cxxxvii., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., cl. These, it will be seen, are irregularly scattered through the book, though they are, for the most part, near its close.

In regard to the origin and authority of the titles to the several psalms, see § 4.

§ 3. *The formation of the collection and arrangement of the Book of Psalms.*—The Jewish Talmud (Cod. Berachot, 1, 9) ascribes the formation of the Psalter, or the assembling of the Book of Psalms, to David. It is unnecessary to remark that this cannot be a correct opinion, as many of the psalms are indubitably of a later date than the time of David. Most of the Christian fathers, and many critics of modern times, ascribe the collection and arrangement of the book to Ezra, and this is now regarded as the most probable opinion; and if so the collection must have been formed about 450 years before Christ. But though this may be regarded as the correct opinion in regard to the completion of the whole as it now stands, yet there is evidence in the psalms themselves of the existence of smaller collections made before from which the general one was ultimately formed. By whom those smaller collections were made is not now known, nor can it be ascertained what changes may have been made in them when the general collection was formed.

The book is divided in the Hebrew into five minor books or collections, sufficiently marked in their character, and so indicated at the close of each as to make it every way probable that these may have been *published*, so to speak, in the form of different books, or that

the later were additions to the first collection or volume. This division is found also in the Septuagint version—a fact which proves that it existed as early as the year 200 before Christ. These portions bear marks of being not *arbitrary* divisions made at the time when the general collection was formed, but distinct and independent collections by different persons. The grouping is not precisely accurate, that is, in the first part, the "Psalms of David" (Ps. i.—xli.), not *all* the psalms of David are included; and there are a few that are not ascribed to him in the title; but still it was so complete at the time, probably, as to make it proper to regard it as a collection of *his* psalms in respect to the purpose for which that collection was made.

The first book embraces the first forty-one psalms, and was, probably, a collection of David's psalms as such, although it does not embrace by any means *all* that he wrote, probably not all that were extant at the time when the collection was made. The *close* of this "book" is indicated by the words "Amen, and Amen," Ps. xli. 13. All the psalms in this collection, except Ps. i., ii., x., and xxxiii., are expressly ascribed to David, and it is every way probable that all were composed by him. In many manuscripts, in the Septuagint, and in the Latin Vulgate, the first psalm is united with the second (as are, also, in other parts of the general collection, Ps. xlii. and Ps. xliii., and Ps. cxvi. and cxvii.). It is probable that this collection was early made, though De Wette has endeavoured to show that it could not have been until after the Exile, as he supposes that Ps. xiv. and xliv. were composed *after* that event. Of this, however, there is no evidence. Of course it is impossible to determine by whom this collection was made. It has been supposed by some that it was as early as the time of Hezekiah, and that it was prepared under his direction, as he is known to have ordered a collection of the proverbs of Solomon to be made and written out (Prov. xxv. 1); and as (2 Chron. xxix. 30) he "commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David." (Kitto, *Ency.*)

The second book in the general collection comprises Ps. xlii.—lxxii. This collection is made up of the psalms of "the sons of Korah," Ps. xlii.—xlix.; of one of the psalms of Asaph, Ps. l.; of nineteen psalms of David; of two whose authors are not named; and of one inscribed "to Solomon," or "*for* Solomon," Ps. lxxii. At the end of this collection (Ps. lxxii. 20) the following notice is given: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended;" and some have supposed that this was the close of the *entire* psalms preceding it, as one book or collection, Ps. i.—lxxii. Carpzov. Introd. ii. 107. But that this was a different collection, or that there were two collections made by different persons, seems evident from the fact that Ps. liii.

is the same as Ps. xiv., with only slight variations—the variations consisting mainly in the fact that the word *Elohim* is used as the name of God in the latter, in the place of *Jehovah* in the former. It cannot be supposed that a collector would have used the same psalm with such a variation in the same collection. So also Ps. lxx. is but a repetition of Ps. xl. 13—17, with only a similar change.

It may be *suggested* that these two collections may have been subsequently *united*, and may have constituted *one* before the more general collection was made. Thus, the natural *close* of this collection, as of the first collection (Ps. xli. 13), would be with the words "Amen, and Amen," Ps. lxxii. 19. To the *entire* collection—the two combined—these words may have been added (Ps. lxxii. 20), "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended," meaning that *now* an entire and complete collection of the Psalms of *David* had been made in the *two* combined; or, that *as many had been combined for public worship as were then intended to be used in that service.* This idea would not prevent the supposition that there may have been at that time, in fact, other psalms of David in existence; or that they might have been subsequently introduced into the worship of God in *other* collections.

The third book (Ps. lxxiii.—lxxxix.) consists in part (Ps. lxxiii.—lxxxiii.) of psalms of Asaph, and in part (Ps. lxxxiv.—lxxxix.) of the psalms of the sons of Korah, including one of David (Ps. lxxxvi.). The book contains none of the psalms of David, with the exception of Ps. lxxxvi., and therefore the notice is given at the end of the second book (Ps. lxxii. 20), that "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." It was evidently the design of the author of the compilation at the *close* of that book not to admit in the following book *any* of the psalms of David; perhaps it was the intention *not* to collect any more of the psalms of David for the purpose of public worship. Possibly, as De Wette (Einleitung, p. 21) suggests, the author of the collection in the third book put the notice at the end of the second book that David's psalms ended there, it being his intention to make a collection of another kind. *When* this collection was made is unknown. From Ps. lxxxv. it would seem probable that it was made as late as the return from the captivity at Babylon. *That* psalm may have been written by one of the company called "the sons of Korah;" or it may have been composed for their use in the sanctuary. This collection closes, like the two former, with the expressive "Amen, and Amen," Ps. lxxxix. 52.

The fourth collection (Ps. xc.—cvi.) is made up wholly of anonymous psalms, with the exception of Ps. xc., which is ascribed to Moses, and Ps. ci. and ciii., which are ascribed to David. They are psalms which have almost no local references or allusions, which

might, for the most part, have been composed in any country or at any period of the world; and which, in their structure and allusions, give no indication of their authors or of the circumstances which led to their composition. Their authorship, except in the three instances above mentioned, cannot now be ascertained; nor is it necessary to determine that question in order fully to understand and appreciate them. They were manifestly designed for public worship, and probably written with the intention of being so used. This book closes (Ps. cvi. 48) with the expression "Amen, Hallelujah."

The fifth and last book (Ps. cvii.—cl.), is miscellaneous in its character, and seems to have been intended to be a collection of *all* the scattered psalms which would be proper for public worship, which had not found a place in the other collections. Part (Psalms cviii., cix., cx., cxxii., cxxiv., cxxxi., cxxxiii., the four last being among the "Songs of Degrees," cxxxviii., cxxxix., cxl., cxli., cxlii., cxliii., cxliv., cxlv.,) are ascribed to David. Part (Psalms cxx.—cxxxiv.) consist of the "Songs of Degrees." The rest (Psalms cvii., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxiv., cxv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., cxix., cxxxv., cxxxvi., cxxxvii., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., cl.) are anonymous. By whom, and when this last collection was made is unknown. It may without improbability, however, be supposed that it was made by the person—Ezra, perhaps—who undertook to collect into one the entire "books" already existing, and who found many psalms that had not been included by the collectors of the previous books, and who, therefore, grouped all these together in a single book, to be added in the general collection to those which had been already classified and arranged.

§ 4. *The titles to the several psalms.*—All the psalms, except thirty-four, have now in the Hebrew titles or superscriptions. Some, however, reckon but twenty-five exceptions, as, according to their view, the phrase, *Hallelujah,* "Praise ye the Lord," occurring at the commencement of several of the psalms, is regarded by them as a title or superscription. The more correct supposition, however, undoubtedly is to regard that phrase as a part of the psalm. To each one of these exceptions the Talmud gives the name of *Orphan Psalms.*

(*a*) The *authorship* of these titles is unknown, and cannot now be ascertained. They are found in the Hebrew; but it is not to be supposed that, so far as the *name* of the author of the psalm is concerned, or so far as they are intended to indicate the author, they were prefixed to the psalm by the authors themselves. The Psalms are not of the nature of epistles or histories, and it cannot be supposed that the author would prefix his name to a mere poem

or hymn. The probability, therefore, is, that they were prefixed to the psalms as they came into common use, or by the collectors of the several books, or the collector of the entire book, either as indicating what was the common opinion on the subject of the authorship, and the occasion on which they were composed, or as an inspired record in regard to that authorship and design. The question *by whom* they were prefixed is, however, a point which cannot now be determined. If it were possible to ascertain that, it would do much to determine their authority and worth, but the estimate of their value must now be settled by some other method than this.

(*b*) These titles are of great *antiquity*. The fact that they are found in the Hebrew manuscripts proves this, for there are no Hebrew manuscripts, however ancient, without them. They are found, with some variations, in the Septuagint; and it is thus certain that they existed before that translation was made. This point is also confirmed by the fact that the translators of the Septuagint have, in some instances, copied the Hebrew words in Greek letters, without attempting to translate them; and that, in other instances, the titles which they use are translations of the Hebrew words, and show that they must have been made from a Hebrew original. These facts, however, would not make it necessary to suppose that they had been prefixed by the writers themselves, nor would it be *necessary* to suppose that they were prefixed before the time when the psalms were collected,—either the separate books, or the general collection.

(*c*) The *design* of these titles is either to designate the author of the psalm, or the occasion on which it was composed, or the chief singer to whom it was dedicated, and to whom it seems to have been committed to set it to appropriate music—that is, to arrange the music for a public use of the psalm; or the style of the poetry; or the instrument which was to be used; or the *tune* which was to be sung. Some of the titles simply designate the author, as in many of those ascribed to David; some describe at length the occasion on which they were written, as Ps. xviii., xxx., li., lii., lvi., etc. etc. Some combine several of these things together, the author, the occasion, the style of the poetry, the music to be used, etc., as Ps. lii., liii., liv., lv., lvi. The longest and fullest of these titles is that prefixed to Ps. lx., where we have the dedication to the chief musician, the name of the author, the style of the poetry, the design of the psalm, the instrument of music to be employed, and the historical occasion on which the psalm was composed.

(*d*) It is very difficult at this distance of time to explain the *meaning* of many of these titles, and critics have differed very

materially in their conjectures on this subject. The difficulty arises in a considerable degree from our ignorance in regard to the Temple-music, and to the instruments which were employed. The difficulty is the same which would exist two or three thousand years from the present time in explaining a book, now familiar, containing "tunes" of music, and a reference to the instruments of music which are now employed in the public service of God. It might be difficult, if not impossible, so to describe the exact instrument of music used as to be intelligible to a future age; and it would be obviously impossible to explain satisfactorily the *names* of many of the *tunes* which are now in common use—as "Mear," "St. Martin's," "Russia,' "Windham," "Lenox." The difficulty, as has been remarked above, was felt even at the time when the Septuagint version was made, as in several instances the authors of that version have not attempted even to translate the title, but have expressed it in Greek letters answering to the Hebrew. Coverdale, who translated the Bible in 1535, felt the difficulty to be so great that he has omitted nearly all the titles except the names of the authors. In these Notes, as far as an explanation can now be given that is satisfactory or probable, it will be offered in the exposition of the particular psalms.

(*e*) There has been a wide difference of opinion respecting the *authority* of these titles. Not a few modern critics, especially German critics, regard them as of no authority, and argue in respect to the authorship of the psalms, and the time and occasion on which they were composed, as if no such titles were found in the Hebrew. By most of the ancient critics they were considered as genuine, and as having equal authority with the psalms themselves. They were wholly rejected at the close of the fourth century by Theodore of Mopsuestia, one of the ablest and most judicious of the ancient interpreters. Rosenmüller, Hist. Interp. Librorum Sacrorum, P. III., p. 256. Tholuck and Hengstenberg admit their authority. The *objections* to the authority of the title are such as these:—(1.) That the *subscriptions* at the close of the epistles in the New Testament are now regarded as of no historical value, and it is asked why may not the same conclusion be adopted in regard to the titles *prefixed* to the psalms? (2.) That the ancient versions, the Syriac and the Greek especially, exhibit them with great variations, often altering the Hebrew, and sometimes giving a heading where the Hebrew has none. It is asked whether these ancient translators would have taken such liberties if the titles had been considered sacred like the psalms themselves? (*Kitto*).—It is added on this point, that "if ever Ezra settled them, the variations in versions and manuscripts have tended since to make them doubtful." Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, III., p. 490. (3.) It is argued that the titles are at variance with the

contents of the psalms. Thus, it is alleged that sometimes the name of the author is incorrectly given, "as when David is named over the psalms referring to the captivity," as in Ps. xiv., xxv., li., lxix. It is also alleged that Ps. cxxxix. cannot be David's, as it is not free from Chaldaisms. It is also said that the occasion on which a psalm was composed is not always correctly specified, as in Ps. xxx.

It is to be observed, however, that these writers sometimes *assume* that a psalm refers to the time of the exile when it would be possible to explain it on the supposition that it was composed at an earlier date; and that it is not always safe to argue from the internal evidence of a psalm against the inscription. A critic affixes his own interpretation to a psalm, and then adopts that as a basis of argument in regard to its origin; whereas often, possibly in all cases, if the inscription were assumed to be correct, it would not be difficult to explain the psalm, by fair rules of interpretation, in accordance with that supposition.

On the whole, it seems to me that these inscriptions are to be regarded as a part of the inspired record, and as having the authority of inspiration. The fact that they are found in the Hebrew,—that they can be traced back to the earliest periods when we have any knowledge of the Hebrew text,—that they have come down to us with that text,—furnishes proof which it seems we cannot now set aside; that they are to be regarded as a part of the text, and that they should not be rejected, except as any other portion of the Hebrew text should be rejected, *i. e.*, only when it can be demonstrated that an error has crept into the text by the fault of transcribers.

§ 5. *The general character of the Book of Psalms.*—The Psalms are mostly lyrical poetry, that is, poetry adapted to the harp or lyre; to be used in connexion with instrumental music; to be *sung*, not *read*. Such poetry was common among the ancients, as it is among the moderns. Anacreon, Alcæus, Stesichorus, Sappho, and Horace were eminent among the ancients as *lyric* poets; and the numerous writers of *songs*, sacred and secular, among the moderns, are to be ranked in the same class. The phrase *lyric poetry* now, however, is frequently applied to that species of poetry which "directly expresses the individual emotions of the poet" (Webster, *Dic.*).

Lyric poetry is, for the most part, an expression of deep *feeling*, and has its foundation *in* feeling or emotion. It is not so much the fruit of the understanding as of the heart; not so much the creation of the imagination as the utterance of deep personal emotion. It embraces in its design and nature all kinds of feeling, and may be joyous, pensive, desponding, triumphant, according to the feelings of

the author, or to the occasion; for all these utterances may be *sung*, or may be set to *music*, the varying tones of *music* being adapted to express them all. Hence, in the Psalms, one hundred and fifty in number, and composed by a considerable variety of individuals, and on many different occasions, we have the varied *feelings* of trouble, anguish, fear, hope, joy, trust, thankfulness, devotion to God, penitence for sin, and the exultation of forgiveness,—*the heart moved*, and finding vent for its feelings in words adapted to the melody of the lyre, or the musical tones of the voice. These feelings are expressed in a great variety of modes or forms, and the music was intended, doubtless, to be in accordance with these varied feelings. The Psalms, therefore, comprise compositions of the following classes or orders:—

(1.) Hymns in which the praise of God is the principal and leading object, as (*a*) in general, God is praised as the God of nature and of men, Ps. viii., civ., cxlv.; (*b*) as the God of nature and of the Hebrew people, Ps. xix., xxix., xxxiii., lxv., xciii., cxxxv., cxxxvi., cxlvii.; (*c*) as peculiarly the God of the Hebrew people, Ps. xlvii., lxvi., lxvii., lxxv.; (*d*) as the helper and deliverer of his people, Ps. xlvi., xlviii., lxxv., lxxvi., xviii., xxx., cxxxviii.

(2.) Psalms pertaining to the Hebrew nation; to its history; to the Divine interposition in its behalf; and to its relation to Jehovah. Ps. lxxviii., cv., cvi., cxiv.

(3.) Temple psalms, or songs of Zion. Ps. ii., xv., xxiv., lxxxvii., cxxxii.

(4.) Psalms in relation to trial, calamity, distress, whether of individuals or of the nation. These abound, as Ps. vii., xxii., lv., lvi., cix., xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxx., cxxxvii., lxix., lxxvii., cii., x., xii., xiv., xxxvi., and many others.

(5.) Religious and moral psalms, Ps. xc., cxxxix., xxiii., xci., cxxi., cxxvii., cxxviii., xlii., xliii., ci., cxxxi., i., cxxxiii., cxix.

The *peculiarity* of the Hebrew lyrical poetry as distinguished from the lyrical poetry of other ancient people, and from most of the lyrical poetry in modern times, is its *religion*. It is lyrical poetry on subjects pertaining to religion, or to be employed *in* religion: as expressing religious feeling, and as designed to awaken and foster such feeling. It is intended to raise the heart and the affections towards God; to lift up the thoughts of men from the earth; to inspire confidence in God; to produce consolation as derived from God in times of trouble; to cheer and comfort man in his pilgrimage along a path of sorrow and trouble to a better abode. Much of it can be best characterised by an expression derived from the Bible itself—an expression no less remarkable for its beauty than its truthfulness—as "SONGS IN THE NIGHT" (Job xxxv. 10); songs indicating the joy that may spring up

in the soul of man in times of distress and sorrow; songs that show that there *is* joy in the darkness of this world; songs which illustrate the power and the value of religion; songs with which men cheer themselves and each other in their journey towards the grave; songs which even the guilty may pour forth from hearts softened into penitence, and filled with thankfulness in the assurance of pardon.

It is most remarkable that this rich poetry should have sprung up in Palestine, and that it should have been confined to that land. It was not that the land was better adapted to lyric poetry than other lands—for in this respect it could not compare favourably with many other countries, and particularly with Greece. It was not that the events of their history had been such as peculiarly to suggest this kind of composition—for poetry adapted to the lyre or to music abounded elsewhere, and especially in Greece. It was not that the Hebrews had a more poetic imagination than other people—for theirs did not, in this respect, surpass the Greek genius, and whatever there was of poetic imagination in the character of their minds was found with equal richness in Arabia and Persia. Nor was it that their language was peculiarly favourable for this kind of poetry—for in very many respects it was far inferior in this point to the Greek, and had no superiority certainly over the Arabian and Persian.

The fact that their poetry took this turn; the fact that all which they had was religious; the fact that there was literally no poetry in their language that was designed and adapted to the dance, to festive amusements, to Bacchanalian orgies, to scenes of gaiety, frivolity, and vanity; the fact that in *all* the lyric poetry of the Hebrews there is literally nothing in this respect that can be placed by the side of much in the Greek lyric poetry—much in Horace—much in Burns; by the side of the lyric poetry of all lands except Palestine, can be traced only to the idea that the new religion prevailed there, and can be best explained on the supposition that the authors of that poetry were *inspired* to prepare and transmit to future times that which, in all ages, would express the feelings of true devotion, and which might be permanently employed in the praises of God. He will fail to explain the fact that such poetry is found in Palestine alone, and will fail to appreciate its true nature, who does not admit that these "sweet singers" were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

On the general character of Hebrew poetry, see Introduction to the Notes on the Book of Job, sect. v. On "the origin and culture of lyric poetry among the Hebrews," it may be proper to introduce here the following remarks from De Wette's "Commentar ueber die Psalmen," Einleitung, II., pp. 6–12. I copy from the elegant translation of the introduction of De Wette, by Prof. J. Torrey, in the Biblical Repository, Vol. III., pp. 450–456:—

"If we follow the titles of the Psalms and the common opinion, we must suppose the lyric poetry of the Hebrews, as well as the largest portion of the Psalms themselves, a production of David and his contemporaries. The few specimens of lyric composition which we find before David scarcely enter into consideration, compared with the fertility of his own period. In the earlier history it is but occasionally that the voice of poetry is heard, as in the songs of Moses at the Red Sea, of Deborah, and of Hannah. We are surprised, after so few attempts in lyric poetry, to see so accomplished and fruitful a poet rise up all at once, with several others in his company. So rapid a progress supposes some adequate occasion, some preparatory steps. Now, if we cast our eye over the history of the times immediately preceding the age of David, we are presented with a phenomenon which seems to explain the difficulty. It is Samuel's school of the prophets. Many, as Herder, Eichhorn, Nachtigall, and Rosenmüller, suppose that the composition of psalms was cultivated and brought to perfection in this seminary. Specious as this conjecture appears, it is hardly reconcilable with the facts of the history. It is not intimated that David, before his unction, had any connexion with Samuel. The former tends his father's flock. Indeed Samuel appears to have had no acquaintance with David when he comes to anoint him, 1 Sam. xvi. 6, seq. Yet David is already a skilful minstrel, and famed for his art, ib. ver. 18; he was not, therefore, a disciple of Samuel, at least in minstrelsy. But it is well known that music and song at this period were not separated; we must therefore suppose that David was already a poet, and, as such, known and celebrated. Some time afterwards, it is true, we find David in Samuel's school of the prophets, but it is only on the occasion of his flight from Saul, 1 Sam. xix. 18, seq. It may be possible that Samuel had some acquaintance with David prior to his unction, though no mention is made of it in the account of that transaction, 1 Sam. xvi. But he might have been an object of attention to the prophet without being properly his disciple; or perhaps the youth was his own instructor. Natural capacity, in connexion with frequent practice, might produce the same degree of talent, to say the least, as an artificial system of instruction, like that which we may suppose to have prevailed in the prophetic school. At the same time, it would be an error to imagine that lyric poetry arose amongst the Hebrews all at once, as if it sprung out of the ground. David's contemporaries, the women who celebrated with song and joy his victory over Goliath, practised a species of poetry which, though rude and uncultivated, was truly lyric in its kind; their short poem,

Saul smote his thousands,
But David his ten thousands,

has already the form of the poetic parallelism, and an original and superior mind might easily advance from such a beginning to the highest degree of excellence. We find also, still earlier, in addition to the examples of Moses, Deborah, and Hannah, the practice, particularly among the women, of music and the dance, from which song certainly was not excluded. Jephthah's daughter comes out to meet her father with timbrels and dances, Judges xi. 34. At Shiloh the maidens held a yearly feast with dances, Judges xxi. 21.

It may be questioned whether Samson was not a minstrel, for he is called out to play before the Philistines, Judges xvi. 25, which is commonly understood to refer to the dance, but excludes not the accompaniments of song and instrumental music. But even if he was not, strictly speaking, a musician and singer, yet we meet in him with the first *Mashal* poet, as we have also from the same period the masterly apologue of Jotham. Such facts, though insulated, pre-suppose among a people a considerably high degree of cultivation, or at least of poetical capacity. Indeed, the song of Deborah alone proves that the poetic art was already arrived at a stage of improvement sufficient to account for the origin of the Davidian poetry. Whether a period produces one admirable poem or more is a matter of chance rather than the result of the state of culture. Besides, the times of the Judges and of Samuel constituted the heroic age of the Hebrews, a period peculiarly favourable to the first beginnings and gradual improvement of poetry. 'Such times,' says Eichhorn, 'are poetical under every climate;' but I cannot add with him, 'that poetry, in this case, is like the nation, wild and heroic, breathes only in the warlike trump, and knows no field for practice but that of valour and victory with their attendant train.' The occasions which first called forth the Hebrew poets were, probably enough, connected with war; but when poetry has once sprung into life, she confines herself to no such narrow limits, and draws still other objects within her circle. With feasts of victory, sacrifices, dances, and other rites were united, which might easily have tempered the song to a tone of somewhat softer character. Even warlike songs admit of the gentler emotions, and the song of Deborah is rich in touches of amiable feeling. When it is said they sung to the trumpet, we are certainly not to understand it in the literal sense; the music of the harp, of the flute, and of the timbrel, was the accompaniment even of the songs of war, and these instruments are adapted to the softest tones. We are not then obliged to trace the origin of the sweet and amiable poetry of David's psalms exclusively to Samuel's school of the prophets.

"Unfortunately we know far too little about the prophetic school of Samuel to determine what influence it had on the cultivation of poetry. The passages relating to it are 1 Sam. x. 5 and xix. 19, 20. In the first of these it is undoubtedly implied that the disciples of the prophets had music among them, and their 'prophesying' (חִתְנַבֵּא) has been understood, not without grounds, in the sense of song; for the word נָבִיא sometimes signifies poet, Ex. xv. 20, and נָבָא, to sing, 1 Chr. xxv. 1, seq. We may suppose, however, that this music was employed simply as a support and accompaniment of the prophetic delivery. The prophets probably delivered their messages, in the earlier times at least, in connexion with music and a vehement action and declamation approaching to a dance. The passage in 2 Kings iii. 15, seq. is remarkable. The prophet Elisha is about to pronounce the answer of the Lord to certain inquiries of Jehoshaphat; but before he does it, he asks for a minstrel; and as the latter strikes the harp, 'the hand of Jehovah comes upon him,' and he utters his reply. The case here, it is true, is different; the prophet does not play and sing himself, but submits to the performance of

another; still it shows the constant connexion of music with the prophetic office. Neither is it distinctly asserted in the passages above that the company of the prophets *sung* themselves. The word הִתְנַבֵּא, which is there employed, may not perhaps signify *to sing*, for Saul and Saul's messengers prophecy—הִתְנַבְּאוּ—as soon as they hear the music, without preparation or practice. Their prophesying was perhaps nothing more than a vehement action, dancing, and gesticulation, as we see from the circumstance of Saul's falling down naked. At farthest, they might have joined in the choral song with the company of prophets. Such choral chants were perhaps sung in the school of Samuel, but only for the purposes of devotion and inspiration; and the proper design of this school was to educate youth for the prophetic office, that is, to give counsel from the Lord to a people under a theocratic government. Samuel was a prophet, and history has preserved no remains of any poetical works of his. Is it not most probable that he was aiming to educate his disciples likewise for the prophetic office? Now, it is true that the Hebrews drew no accurate line of distinction between lyric poetry and prophetic eloquence; yet these two always differ, particularly in the mode of delivery; for the lyric poem was probably sung, while the prophetic message was only recited. Supposing, then, Samuel was employed in forming his disciples to be prophetic poets or speakers, what is more natural than to imagine that some of them might feel drawn by genius and inclination to lyric poetry, and succeed in perfecting themselves in this? Yet it lay out of the plan of the prophetic school, and was a thing quite accidental. It is hardly correct, therefore, to consider the prophetic school of Samuel simply as an institution for the cultivation of singing and poetry.

"There were other institutions which may have had an influence still more important and decided than this school of the prophets in promoting the culture of lyric poetry, especially of the religious kind. I refer particularly to those musical schools which, according to the account, 1 Chron. xv. 16, seq., were founded by David in aid of the public worship. Yet I cannot retract the unfavourable opinion I once pronounced * upon these and similar narratives in the Chronicles; I must rather confirm it. Besides the reasons there alleged, which I may not repeat, it seems to me to be a circumstance particularly calculated to excite suspicion, that the psalms and fragments of psalms represented by the Chronicles to have been sung at the dedication of the tabernacle and on similar occasions can hardly have been penned by David, but belong rather to the later and less pure style of the temple poetry. The psalm which is sung, 1 Chron. xvi. 8, seq., is composed of Ps. cv. and xcvi.; but both are productions of a later style. If the Chronicles had presented us on this occasion with a genuine song of David, such as the elegy for which we are indebted to 2 Sam. i., this circumstance would havo contributed not a little to add weight to its authority, but the insertion of these fragments throws suspicion over the whole of the accompanying narrative. The phrase also, quoted 1 Chron xvi. 41, and elsewhere, respecting the Levites who were appointed to give thanks to the

* Beyträge zur Einleit. ins A. T., vol. i., p. 85, sq.

Lord, 'because his mercy endureth for ever,' betrays the later poetry of the temple, an example of which we have in Ps. cxxxvi, where this phrase forms a regular refrain; also Psalms cvi., cvii., and cxviii., in which this phrase occurs appear to belong to a later style of poetry.

"We may imagine that a master like David would not be without companions and assistants in the poetic art; and, in fact, several of David's contemporaries are named in the titles as composers of psalms: but these notices are not always good authority. Solomon, according to the testimony of history, united in himself such richness of lyric invention with the sententious style peculiar to him, that in his time lyric poetry must have attained to a very high degree of perfection. 'Solomon spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five,' 1 Kings iv. 32. It is singular, however, that with the exception of two which are quite uncertain, no psalms of Solomon are preserved in our present collection; nor do we find any psalm with the author's name belonging to the period after Solomon, not even one which admits of being referred with certainty and of necessity to any particular event in the history of those times; and yet such lyric poems as those of Hezekiah and of Habakkuk clearly evince, that during this period the culture of lyric composition had by no means fallen into neglect. On the contrary, we have many psalms which, according to the results of a sound critical exegesis almost universally acknowledged, must be placed in the times of the captivity, and after the captivity; and these psalms rank, for purity of language, and for sublimity, beauty, and freshness of conception, in the highest class, and are, in no respect, inferior to the poems of David and his contemporaries, *e. g.*, Ps. xlv., lxxiv, lxxix., cvii., and many, if not all, of the Psalms of Degrees. We are here presented, then, with a singular phenomenon. The lyric poetry of the Hebrews, which was cultivated and brought to perfection in the times of David, after producing abundance of fruit, sank into a repose of nearly five hundred years, and then all at once, in the most calamitous period of the state, arose again, survived another golden age, and yielded a second harvest—a phenomenon hardly corresponding with the common course of events. The singularity, however, disappears as soon as we suppose that the collection of Psalms contains several pieces, either anonymous or incorrectly named, which belong to the period extending from David to the captivity. Indeed, it is in the highest degree probable that lyric composition flourished side by side with the prophetic poetry, and that many of the prophets themselves contributed to our present collection, and might reclaim their own productions from David and others. Some of the prophets, too, are actually named by the Septuagint as authors of psalms."

§ 6. *The imprecations in the Psalms.*—Much has been written on the subject of the imprecations in the Psalms, or, as they are called, "The imprecatory psalms;" and perhaps there is no part of the Bible that gives more perplexity and pain to its readers than this; perhaps nothing that constitutes a more plausible objection to the belief that the psalms are the productions of inspired men than the spirit of revenge which they sometimes seem to breathe, and the spirit of

cherished malice and implacableness which the writers seem to manifest. There has been probably no explanation offered which has relieved the minds of those who are thus perplexed, or which has furnished a solution wholly satisfactory on the question how this spirit can be reconciled with the precepts of the New Testament and with the requirements of true religion. It is useless to attempt to disguise or to conceal the difficulty, and it may be admitted that most of the explanations which have been suggested leave the difficulty just where it was. Perhaps it is not possible for us to remove all such difficulty, or so to present the subject that questions may not be asked which it would be impossible to answer, and, indeed, what subject is there in mental philosophy, in natural science, in morals, or in theology, on which questions may not be asked which the human powers are not yet competent to answer? In regard to the growth of a blade of grass, questions may be asked which no chemist—no man —*can answer*.

In reference to the imprecations in the Psalms, it will be proper, first, to refer to some specimens of such psalms, that we may know where the difficulty lies; and then to consider in what way, if any, this difficulty may be solved.

The following are among the passages which would be referred to as belonging to that class of psalms. They are not, indeed, *all* that could be selected, but they are *fair* specimens, and there are no others that would involve any difficulty which are not found in these.

Ps. v. 10: "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee."

Ps. x. 15: "Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none."

Ps. xviii. 40—42: "Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets."

Ps. xxviii. 4: "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert."

Ps. xxxi. 17: "Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave."

Ps. xxxv. 3—8: "Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark

and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall."

Ps. xl. 14: "Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil."

Ps. lv. 9: "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city." 15: "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick [*alive, living*] into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them."

Ps. lviii. 6—10: "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked."

Ps. lix. 12—15: "For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied."

Ps. lxviii. 2: "As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

Ps. lxix. 22—25: "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents."

Ps. lxxix. 12: "And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord."

Ps. lxxxiii. 9—17: "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna. . . . O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish."

Ps. cix. 6—15: "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at

his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth."

Ps. cxxxvii. 7—9: "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

These are specimens of the class of psalms now under consideration, and though the number might be somewhat increased, yet these examples embrace those which are most difficult to be explained, and involve all the difficulties to be found in this class of the psalms. None could be adduced which *seem* to breathe a more vindictive spirit than these do; none *seem* to be more opposed to the spirit of the New Testament. If, therefore, a solution can be suggested that would be satisfactory in regard to these passages, it would be easy to apply the principles of such a solution to all the similar passages in the Psalms.

The inquiry then occurs in what way, if in any way, the difficulty is to be solved, or what explanations can be suggested.

On this subject the following remarks may be made:—(1.) Whatever difficulty there exists, is created by the Bible itself. The record is one which the sacred writers have themselves made. This fact is proof at least of candour, and of a consciousness on their part that there was *nothing* in this record which was not founded in truth, which did not really occur; that is, that these feelings actually existed in their minds. It cannot be pretended that the writers indulged in feelings which they were unwilling to record; which they were ashamed to make known. In fact, they took all the methods in their power to make them known, and to have the record perpetuated. They not only *recorded* them—put them in a permanent form—but they embodied them in poetry, which was to be employed in the public worship of God; which was to go down to future ages, to direct the devotions of the people of far-distant times. Moreover, if there is any condemnation of this spirit in the Bible—if there was anything wrong in this spirit—we are to remember that the

condemnation is found in the very book where these expressions occur —for it is to be assumed here that, so far as the objection lies against these expressions as a part of the Bible—as a part of a pretended revelation—*the Bible is one book;* the Old Testament and the New are parts of the same revelation from God. The Bible, thus in making the record, should be allowed at least to be a book of candour —a book in which there is no attempt to *conceal* what was actually passing in the minds of the writers. There was, it may be presumed some reason for *making* the record which was regarded as not inconsistent with the purpose of a revelation; and it was assumed also that these things would be susceptible of an explanation, which would be consistent with the claim that the Bible was a revelation from God.

(2.) It may be a fair subject of inquiry how much of what is charged as wrong, harsh, and vindictive, may be referred to the spirit of the age in which the Bible was composed, and in which these men lived. This remark is not made on the supposition that the principles of morals and religion change from one age to another; or that they are modified by the circumstances of men; or that the same thing is morally right in one age or country, and morally wrong in another. Truth and holiness, right and wrong, do not change, nor are they dependent on the caprices or the customs of mankind. Still, in order to know exactly what was *meant;* how much words express; what was the precise idea intended to be conveyed by language that was used,—it is necessary for us to place ourselves in the circumstances, and to understand the prevailing customs and habits of the people who used the language. We constantly apply these principles, insensibly it may be, when we read Homer, or when we read the records of knight-errantry, or when we endeavour to understand the poetry of any people in the earlier periods of history. The language which a Covenanter or a Puritan used *may* possibly have expressed no other internal emotion than would be expressed by the milder language which we should use; the rough words which the uneducated and the vulgar use *may* express no different feelings than would be found to exist when the thoughts are conveyed in the smooth tones, and the courtly phrases of those in the higher walks of life. There may be as much bitter feeling beneath silk and satin as beneath a dress made of the skins of wild beasts; in the palace as in the wigwam. It may be possible that those who lived in the earlier ages of the world really *meant* no more by the language which they often used, and which seems to us to be so harsh, so revengeful, and so savage, than we do in the milder tones which we employ, and which we now suppose to be demanded by civilization and Christianity. It is, at least, a supposable case that the people of future times *may* have had conveyed to them as much in the records of *our*

literature, and of *our* customs, which they will find it difficult to explain consistently with *their* notions of refinement, civilization, and the spirit of pure religion, as *we* recognise in the language of the Covenanters and the Puritans of Scotland and England, or in the poetic effusions of the days of David. Let us be sure that we understand precisely what they *meant*, and exactly how our own spirit is better than theirs, before we condemn them.

(3.) Part of these passages *may* undoubtedly be regarded as prophetic; expressing what *would be*, rather than indicating any *wish* on the part of the author of the psalms that such things *should* be. In some instances, the passages might have been rendered in the future instead of the imperative mood, with no violation of the laws of the Hebrew language, or the proper principles of interpretation. Several of the passages of this kind which may properly be applied to the Messiah, are undoubtedly of this nature, and those passages are to be interpreted, when the laws of language will admit of such an interpretation, as expressive of what sinners *deserve*, and of what *will* come upon them, and not as indicating any *desire* on the part of the author that it should be so.

It must be admitted, however, that this consideration does by no means remove all the difficulty, nor does it in fact even diminish it. It cannot be affirmed by any one acquainted with the Hebrew language that this solution could be applied to *all* the cases in reference to which the difficulty exists, and there is still an explanation needed to meet the cases which cannot be brought under this rule. In a book claiming to be inspired the objection is, in effect, as great if there is only one such passage as if there are many. The essential difficulty is to explain it consistently with the claim to inspiration at all.

It should be conceded, further, that this explanation is one which cannot be admitted in regard to the most difficult of the passages. No man can show that they are *all* mere predictions of the future; no one can prove that *all* that is implied in these passages is a mere expression of what sin *deserves*, or what *ought* to be inflicted on transgressors. Beyond all question there is, in many cases, an expression of *feeling*—or *desire*—or *wish*; there is language used which implies that there would be gratification—satisfaction—pleasure—if the calamity invoked should come upon the enemies of the writer, or if the punishment should be inflicted on the wicked; there is what is of the nature of *prayer*, that these calamities might come, and that the wicked might be detected, arrested, punished. We cannot on any honest principles interpret these psalms without admitting this; and the objector has a right to ask *how* this feeling can be vindicated; how it can be reconciled with the spirit of Christianity; how it can be shown

to be consistent with the belief that the psalms were inspired by the Holy Ghost. This is a fair question to ask, and it is one which a believer in the inspiration of the Bible should be held to answer.

(4.) *Some* of the expressions referred to are a mere record of the feelings of others; of the gratification which *they* would feel in seeing vengeance inflicted on the guilty, even when revenge should be taken in the most barbarous and savage manner. In such a case all that the inspired writer, or the Spirit of inspiration, is responsible for, is *the fairness of the record;* or that he has given an exact statement of the feelings which would be cherished and expressed by those who should inflict the vengeance, or who should experience gratification in seeing it. A man may describe the acts of the American savage, scalping, torturing, murdering by slow degrees women and children, or the acts of cannibals, without being responsible for any of the feelings of the savages in doing this; and the writer of history cannot assuredly be responsible for all or any of the feelings of barbarous delight which a tyrant may have in oppressing his subjects, or for the fury and hatred which leads men to pursue with vengeance their flying victims. The inspired writers who made a record of the cruelty of the sons of Jacob (Gen. xxxiv. 25—29, xlix. 6, 7), or of the act of David in bringing forth the people of Rabbah, and "putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln" (2 Sam. xii. 31), or the acts of Joab, Ahithophel, Absalom, Nebuchadnezzar, Ahab or Jezebel, cannot be held to be answerable for the feelings which they manifested, or the deeds which they performed, nor is it fair to infer that in making the record they *approved* of what was done. All that the writers can be held to be responsible for is the correctness of the record.

An instance of this kind occurs in Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. *Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*" There is nothing to prevent our regarding this as a statement of the actual feelings—the pleasure —the satisfaction—which they would actually *feel* who should wreak vengeance on Babylon. The idea may be, and from anything that appears actually is, that such had been the pride and arrogance of Babylon, such the wrongs which she had done to other people; such her acts of cruelty and oppression,—that they who should overcome, subdue, and destroy her, would have conscious satisfaction and pleasure in bringing deserved punishment on her, even in those forms which men usually regard as savage and barbarous. In this there is nothing which *necessarily* implies that the author of the psalms would approve of it, or that he would have done it himself. If the case is

supposed even to indicate the common feelings of the Hebrew people, in view of the destruction of an enemy under which the nation had suffered so much and so long, still it may be a mere record *of* that feeling as a matter of fact, and the Spirit of inspiration is responsible only for a fair account of the feelings which would actually exist.

In one of the methods which have thus been indicated the difficulties in regard to a portion of what are called the *imprecatory psalms* may be removed altogether. These are solutions, however, which cannot be applied to all of them; and if there is any number, however small,—if there is a single one remaining,—to which these solutions cannot be applied, it must be admitted that the actual difficulty still remains; for the Psalms are to be regarded as forming one book; they have, as is fairly implied in the idea that they are inspired, one author—the Holy Spirit; and as it is a principle which must be held by all who regard the Bible as an inspired book, that one text of Scripture fairly interpreted is sufficient to establish the truth of any doctrine, so it must be admitted that a well-founded objection to a single text, fairly interpreted, as really affects the question of inspiration as though there were many passages of that character. Some other solution, therefore, must be found in order to remove the real difficulty in the case.

(5.) A fifth remark, therefore, in regard to the prayers in these passages considered as invocations of vengeance or of punishment on the wicked may be suggested. The real question is, whether under any circumstance such prayers—such imprecations—can be right; and whether, if ever right, the circumstances in the Psalms were such as to make them proper.

To obtain a just view of this, several remarks are to be made.

(*a*) David was a magistrate; a king. He was, by the appointment of God, the civil and military ruler of the nation. His authority was not an usurped authority; nor were his acts those merely of a private man, a man individually wronged. As a king—a magistrate—he was appointed to preserve order; to maintain law; to dispense justice; to detect, arraign, and punish the guilty. As a magistrate, he represented the state; the majesty of the law; the interests of justice. As a magistrate, an act done—an offence committed—a crime in the community, did not respect him as a man—an individual—but as appointed to administer the government and to defend the state. No one can deny that David sustained this relation to the state, and that the duty of maintaining and administering law rested supremely with him. From anything that appears, also, the remark here made is applicable to each of the cases where "imprecations" are found in the Psalms. The question, then, is, whether there is anything in the office and functions of one appointed to make and

execute the laws of a land which would render such imprecations justifiable.

(*b*) Punishment is right. It is not wrong that a penalty should be affixed to law; it is not wrong that the penalty of a law should be inflicted; it is not wrong that pain, privation of office, imprisonment, and the loss of life itself, should follow the commission of crime. So all laws determine; so all nations have judged. It is material here to remark that this is *not* an arbitrary thing; that it is not a matter of individual or local feeling. It is laid in our very nature. It is found in all nations. It is acted on among all people. *There is* SOMETHING *in our very nature, account for it as we may, which approves of punishment when properly inflicted; which approves of the appointment of a penalty for crime.* If this is wrong, it is a wrong in our very nature; it is a universal wrong; it is a wrong which has gone into the enactment of all laws—for all law has a penalty. A law without a penalty would be a mockery and a farce. When a man, in accordance with a just sentence of law, is fined, imprisoned, executed, WE APPROVE OF IT. We feel that it is what *ought* to be done, and in this feeling we are conscious of no wrong. We are conscious that we are not to be blamed for approving the sentence which condemns the guilty any more than we are for approving the sentence which acquits the innocent. The foundation of this feeling is laid in the very nature of man, and, therefore, it cannot be evil. No man feels that he is blameworthy when he thus finds himself approving of a just sentence of law; no man feels that this principle of his nature *ought* to be resisted or reversed, so that he would be a better man if he were conscious of the opposite feeling.

(*c*) In accordance with this principle, there are arrangements in every community for detecting and punishing crime. There are laws made which define crime, and designate its just penalty; there are arrangements made for arresting the guilty, and bringing them to trial; there are prisons built in anticipation that there will be men to be punished. There are courts organized for the express purpose of trying offenders; there are penalties affixed by law to different classes of crimes; there are processes prescribed in the law books for arresting, indicting, committing, arraigning, and judging those charged with a violation of law. There is a class of men whose business it is to detect and arrest offenders; there is a class whose business it is to try them; there is a class whose business it is to inflict punishment on them. Hence we have a detective police—men whose calling it is to find out offenders; we have an array of constables, jurymen, and judges; we have sheriffs, keepers of prisons, and executioners. These arrangements are *necessary* in our world. Society could not do without them. No community would be safe without

them. No man would feel that his life, his property, his family were secure without them. They enter into the very structure of society as it exists on earth; and if these were abolished, the world would soon be filled with anarchy, bloodshed, and crime.

(*d*) These are lawful, proper, and honourable employments. The business of a detective officer, of a constable, of a sheriff, of a juryman, of a judge, is as lawful as that of a farmer, a blacksmith, a school-teacher, a physician, a clergyman. No man occupies a more honourable position than the judge of a court, though it be a criminal court; no man is rendering more valuable service to his country than he whose daily business it is to detect offenders, to prosecute for crime, or to administer the laws of a nation. The constable and the judge may go to their work with as conscious a feeling that they are engaged in an honourable work as the farmer or the merchant; and the foreman of a jury who declares that a man arraigned for crime has been found "guilty," and the judge who pronounces the sentence of the law, and the man who executes the sentence, may each one lie down on his bed at night as calmly as the man who during the day has been engaged in sowing seed in his field, or gathering in his harvest, or administering medicine to the sick, or preaching the Gospel. Through all that day the one may be as conscious that he has had no malice towards his fellow-men, no desire of revenge, as the other. In the bosom of each one there may have been only the consciousness of a simple desire to do his duty.

(*e*) It is lawful and proper for such a man to pray;—a detective officer, a constable, a juryman, a judge, a keeper of a prison, *a hangman*. It is as proper for such a man to pray as any other man. He may pray in his closet and in his family; he may breathe forth a mental prayer when searching for a man charged with an offence, or when bearing a testimony against him, or when sitting in judgment on him, or when inflicting the penalty of the law. He may pray, as other men do, that he may be "diligent in business;" that he may be "fervent in spirit;" that he may "serve the Lord" in that calling. He may pray that he may have grace to be faithful to his trust; firm in his conduct; *successful in what he is appointed to do*. But what is this? It is that the wicked—the guilty—*may* be brought to punishment; that they *may* be punished; that they may receive the due reward for their deeds. It is not malice against an individual; it is not a desire of revenge; it is not the indulgence of any private feeling; it is not conduct inconsistent with the widest benevolence. The officers of justice are engaged in the very work of bringing men to punishment; and why may they not *pray* for success in the work in which they are engaged? Why may not any man who loves the cause of justice, and who desires the security and good

order of a community, pray that the wicked may be checked in their career—arrested—confined—punished? Since men lawfully engage in doing the thing, why may they not lawfully pray for the Divine blessing to aid them in doing it?

It is further to be remarked that a magistrate offering such a prayer would have a very different feeling from one who was engaged in an unlawful employment. How can a man engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks *pray?* How can he ask for success in his work? To do this would be to pray that his neighbour, his fellow-men, near or far off, might spend their property for that which would not profit them; might waste their time, ruin their health, cut short their lives, and destroy their souls; that they might be profane, gross, offensive, beastly; that they might be a pest in the community, be led into crime, and find their home in an almshouse, a penitentiary, or an insane asylum; that their families might be beggared, and that a once peaceful home might become a hell; and that the young, the vigorous, the hopeful, the beautiful, the sons of the virtuous and the pious—might go down early to the drunkard's grave; that the hearts of wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters might be crushed and broken, because a husband, a father, a brother, had been made a drunkard. But what fiendish malignity would there be in such a prayer as this! Hence such men do not ask the Divine blessing on their work. But a magistrate may pray, and should pray. He may pray that he may be successful in discharging the duties of his office; in administering justice; in prosecuting for crime; and in pronouncing the sentence of the law. His prayer, in fact, is simply that justice may be done to all; that punishment may be inflicted when it is deserved; and that he may be made an instrument in the hands of God in detecting and punishing crime. At the same time this may be so far from being a vindictive and revengeful spirit, that he himself may be among the most kind and humane men in a community, and when he pronounces the sentence of the law, he may be the only one in the court room that shall weep. Tears may flow fast from his eyes as he pronounces the sentence of the law, while the hardened wretch sentenced to the gallows may be wholly unmoved. It indicated no want of feeling and no malevolent spirit when Washington signed the death-warrant of the accomplished André, for he did it with tears.

In the same way, and with the same spirit, a man may go forth to the defence of his country when invaded, or when one portion of it has risen up in rebellion against a lawful government. A soldier called forth to defend his country may pray; the commander of an army may pray—should pray. But the prayer of such an one may be, and should be, in the line of his duty; for success in that which

he has undertaken. It will be a prayer that the enemies of his country may be overcome and subdued. It indicates no malice, no personal feeling, no spirit of revenge, when he prays that the enemies of his country may be scattered as chaff before the wind; or that their counsels may be turned to foolishness; or that he may be successful in subduing them. It is a prayer for the triumph of a righteous cause; and as all his acts *as* a soldier tend to the destruction of the enemies of his country; as he is actually engaged in endeavouring to subdue them; as all his plans contemplate that; as he cannot be successful without that,—if the employment itself is right, it cannot be wrong that he should pray for success in it; that is, that his enemies may be delivered into his hands, and that God would enable him to overcome, to scatter, to subdue them. In this view of the matter there is necessarily no feeling inconsistent with the purest benevolence when the defenders of liberty and law and right apply to themselves the language of Psalm cxlix. :—"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written," vers. 6–9.

(*f*) It only remains to be added, as bearing on the point here suggested, that it cannot be *demonstrated* that there is in the psalms that are called "Imprecatory Psalms" any more of malice, or of a spirit of revenge, than there is in the heart of a detective officer, a constable, a sheriff, a juryman, a crown lawyer, a prosecuting attorney, a judge, the keeper of a penitentiary, or an executioner, when he goes to the daily discharge of the duties of his office, and when, in his closet, or in his family, in his morning devotions, he *prays* that he may be faithful and successful in the discharge of his official duties through the day:—for success in any of these duties will be in the line of prayer, and may be in answer to prayer. If the detective officer is successful in ferreting out a burglar or a counterfeiter; if a magistrate is successful in bringing him to justice; if a juryman pronounces an honest verdict finding him guilty; if an attorney is successful in prosecuting the guilty to conviction; if a judge delivers a just sentence; and if the keeper of a prison closes the massive bars and bolts on the guilty,—at night, when they reflect on their work, they may regard their success in the lawful duties of the day as being as real an answer to prayer in the proper business of human life as the waving golden harvest is an answer to the prayers of the pious farmer, or the ship laden with the rich productions of the East, as she glides gallantly into port, should be regarded as an answer to the prayers of the pious merchant;—and until it is *proved* that this may

not have been all that was implied in the language of the psalmist, it should not be assumed that the imprecatory psalms breathe a vindictive spirit, or are contrary to the purest and most benevolent feelings of the human heart.

(6.) There is still another solution of the difficulty which has been suggested. It is, substantially, that these expressions *are a mere record of what actually occurred in the mind of the psalmist*, and are preserved to us as an illustration of human nature when partially sanctified. According to this explanation we are not required by any just view of inspiration to vindicate those feelings, or to maintain that such feelings could not occur in the case of an inspired man. One of the main objects of the Psalms is to illustrate religion as it actually exists in the minds of good men in this world; men who are not absolutely perfect, but whose best religious emotions are mingled with many imperfections. According to this view the Spirit of inspiration is no more responsible for these *feelings* on the part of the psalmist than it is for the *acts* of David, Abraham, Jacob, or Peter. The *feelings*—the *acts*—are what they are; the Spirit of inspiration is responsible for a correct record or statement in regard to these acts and feelings:—a record that shall be historically and exactly true. A few remarks may explain this further.

(*a*) It is, then, an admitted fact that David was *not* a perfect man; and the same was undoubtedly true of all the writers of the Psalms. The Bible never claims that they were perfect; it makes a fair record of their faults; it lays down the general principle that none are absolutely free from sin: 1 Kings viii. 46; Eccles. vii. 20; James iii. 2; 1 John i. 8; Job ix. 20. As it is everywhere declared in the Bible that no one is absolutely perfect, and as it is admitted that David, for example, was guilty of wrong *acts*, as in the case of Uriah,—so, for the same reason, it is to be admitted that men, even the best of men, are liable to sin in thoughts and in words as well as in deeds.

(*b*) The proper notion of inspiration does not require us to hold that the men who were inspired were absolutely sinless. There is and must be a manifest and palpable difference between being *inspired*, and being personally *perfect*. Inspiration, in its true nature, secures a truthful record; it does not necessarily secure absolute sanctification. Indeed, inspiration has no necessary connexion with sanctification;—as it is conceivable, certainly, in accordance with the common belief, that Balaam uttered true prophecies respecting the Messiah, yet no one from that fact feels bound to maintain that he was otherwise than a bad man. Livy, Gibbon, Hume, Robertson, were not perfect men, and yet it may be true that they have given a correct account of the events which they profess to record; nor do we argue that because they were faithful historians that therefore,

they were perfect men, or that *they* never did or said anything, which, if it were recorded exactly as it occurred, would not be inconsistent with the idea of absolute perfection of character. It is, therefore, a very important principle *that inspiration secures a correct record, not that it implies or secures personal sanctification; and that if it does secure a correct record the limit of responsibility in regard to it is reached.* Assuredly the fact that David in Psalm li. has made a true record in regard to his guiltiness in the case of Uriah, does not prove that he was right or innocent in the fact which is the subject of that record; nor if a record is a record of *feelings* instead of *deeds* does its correctness any more justify or sanction such feelings.

(*c*) It was important and necessary in a revelation from God, in order to meet the wants of the world, that there should be a true representation of religion as it comes in contact with the human heart; as it is in fact illustrated and manifested in the life of *man*, not as it might be in the life of a spotless angel. Assuming, as the Bible does everywhere, that man is depraved; that he has corrupt and evil propensities; that he has passions which by nature are uncontrollable, and that it is the design of religion to teach him how to control and govern them,—what we want is an illustration of religion as it comes in contact with such a heart. If the Bible had described only the feelings and conduct of a *perfect* being, it would be obviously unfit for man, for it would not be adapted to his condition. As man is imperfect and sinful, a representation of religion which would leave the impression that there is no true piety except where there is absolute perfection, would be adapted only to discourage and dishearten, for it would hold up that before his mind which he would feel to be unattainable, and his own consciousness of imperfection would lead him to the painful conclusion that he had no true religion. Hence in the Bible, except in the solitary instance of the Saviour, we have no record of the life of a *perfect* saint. We have a description of piety as it must always be found in the life of man:—as feeble, and struggling, and doubting, and contending with evil passions; as a life of conflict, of mingled light and darkness, good and evil, happiness and sadness, cheerfulness and despondency; as a life where evil often breaks out, where there is a constant effort required to subdue it, and where there is, amidst much that seems to be otherwise, yet truly a constant progress in the soul towards perfection—a perfection not to be obtained in this life, but which is to be consummated in heaven alone. Such a record only is fitted for man; such a record only would properly represent and describe man in his present condition. In another world—in heaven—a true record of man redeemed would be a record of religion without imperfection—as it would now be of the angels. As it is, we have now in the Bible everywhere

recorded the lives of imperfect men:—imperfect in their conduct; imperfect in their feelings; imperfect in their words. We have the biographies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, of Eli, David, Hezekiah, Moses, Aaron, Josiah, James, John, Peter,—all imperfect but good men; men in whose bosoms there were the strugglings between good and evil principles; in whose lives the evil principle was constantly breaking out, and over whom for the time it seemed to triumph. Hence the painful but honest records which we have of piety in the Bible. In like manner, in order to see and understand what true piety *is* as it is found in connexion with human nature, it might be important that there should be such an illustration of it as we actually find in the Psalms: the *honest* record of what passed through the mind of a good man; of what imperfect man actually feels often, even when it is proper to characterise him as a man of God. Probably there have been few men, very few, even under the influence of the highest forms of piety, who, if they had made an *honest* record of what was passing in their minds at all times—of their wishes, desires, emotions; of their feelings towards their enemies, persecutors, and slanderers—would not have found that the language of the Psalms would *better* express their feelings in this respect than any language which they could find elsewhere;—and is it a forced or an unauthorized thought that even such men as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Edwards, at times when unchristian feelings seemed to have got the ascendancy in their hearts; when they were strongly tempted to give way to passion, or actually gave way to it; when they might have been led to doubt whether men with such feelings *could* have any true religion—may have found consolation in the fact that feelings precisely like theirs sprang up in the hearts of the inspired men who composed the Psalms, and who there made an honest record of what was actually passing in the soul, almost an actual transcript of what they themselves experienced? It need be hardly remarked that if this is a true view of the matter, we are not bound to attempt to vindicate these expressions of passion—any more than we are the conduct of David in the matter of Uriah, or of Peter in denying his Lord.

(*d*) According to this view, the expressions which are used in this record are not presented for our imitation. The mere fact that they are recorded as having occurred in the lives of good men is no evidence that they are right, or are to be followed by us. *All* that occurred in the life of the Redeemer was right, and was recorded that, so far as it might be applicable to us in our circumstances, we might imitate it. If the above remarks are correct, then the record was made for far other purposes than that we should imitate the conduct of those who gave expression to these feelings. Nor should the fact that such feelings actually existed in the minds of good men,

or that these "imprecations" are found in their writings, be charged on religion, as if it tended to produce them, any more than the act of adultery and murder on the part of David, or the profaneness of Peter, should be referred to as an illustration of what religion is *adapted* to produce in the hearts and lives of men. Religion is not responsible for these things. The responsibility is in our corrupt nature.

(*e*) If such is a just view of the matter, then all that *inspiration* is responsible for is, the correctness of the *record* in regard to the existence of these feelings:—that is, the authors of the Psalms actually *recorded* what was passing in their own minds. They gave vent to their internal emotions. They state real feelings which they themselves had; feelings which, while human nature remains the same, may spring up in the mind of imperfect man, anywhere, and at any time. They record what other men actually feel; and in making the record, they simply give utterance to what passed through their own hearts. They do not apologize for it; they do not pause to vindicate it; they offer no word in extenuation of it—any more than other sacred writers did when they recorded the *facts* about the errors in the lives of the patriarchs, of David, and of Peter.

In some of these ways it is probable that all the difficulties in regard to the "imprecations" in the Psalms may be met. They who deny the inspiration of the Psalms should be able to show that these are *not* proper explanations of the difficulty; or that they are *not* consistent with any just notions of inspiration.

§ 7. *The practical value of the Book of Psalms.*—It is not a little remarkable that the Psalms, in the estimation of religious persons, hold substantially the same place under the clearer light of the Christian dispensation which they did under the comparatively obscure Hebrew economy, and that with all the additional light which has been imparted under the Christian revelation, the Psalms have not been superseded. The *Christian* looks to the Psalms with an interest as intense as did the ancient Jew; and, as expressive of personal religious experience, as well as for the purpose of a manual for worship, the Psalms are selected by the Christian, from the whole Bible, as they were by the Jew from the books in his possession—the Old Testament. As such, they will retain their value in all times to come, nor will there ever be in our world such an advance in religious light, experience, and knowledge, that they will lose their relative place as connected with the exercises of practical piety. How far this fact is to be regarded as a proof that the authors of the Psalms were inspired; that there was communicated to them a knowledge of the principles and workings of true piety, so in advance of their own age

as to be on a level with what will be possessed in the most advanced periods of religious culture; that there must have been an influence on their minds, in composing the Psalms, beyond anything derived from mere poetic genius, is a question which must occur to all reflecting minds. It is a fair question to propose to one who doubts the inspiration of the Psalms, how he will account for this fact, consistently with his idea that the authors of the Psalms were men endowed only as other men of genius are, and with the acknowledged fact that they lived in an age when the views of truth in the world were comparatively obscure. How did it happen that a Hebrew bard, in the matter of deep religious experience and knowledge, placed himself so high as to be a guide to mankind in all coming times, after a new revelation should have been introduced to the world, and after all the attainments which men would have made in the knowledge of religion and of the human heart?

The special value of the Psalms arises (*a*) from the fact that they are adapted to the worship of God; (*b*) from the fact that they are records of deep religious experience.

(*a*) As adapted to the worship of God. For this many of them were originally designed in their very composition; to this the entire book seems to have been intentionally adapted by those who made the collection. It is not necessary to suppose that these sacred songs comprise the whole of the Hebrew lyrical poetry, for as we know that some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament, though inspired, accomplished their purpose and have been lost, so it may have been in regard to a portion of the lyrical poetry of the Hebrews. Many of the words of the Saviour, though all that he spoke was pure truth—truth such as no other man ever spoke—truth such as the Spirit of God imparts—were lost from not having been recorded (John xxi. 25), and in like manner it may have been that truths which were *written* may have accomplished their purpose, and have passed away. But, if there *were* such productions which have not come down to us, we have no reason to doubt that they were of the same general character as those which have survived, and which now constitute the Book of Psalms. Now, it is remarkable that the poetry of the Hebrews is so adapted to public worship above all other poetry, and that the poetic genius of the nation took so exclusively a religious turn. In this respect the Hebrew lyric poetry stands by itself, and is unlike that of every other nation. Among the Greeks there are, indeed, hymns to the gods—hymns designed to be used in the worship of the gods; but this is by no means the general character of their lyric poetry. Among the Persians, the Arabs, the Romans, the Babylonians, there were doubtless such hymns; but this is not

the prevailing character of *their* lyric poetry. In the early Scotch, French, Spanish, Italian, and English poetry there *are* such hymns, but this is by no means the exclusive or the predominant character of the early lyric poetry of those nations. Few of all their lyric compositions can be used in the worship of the true God; nor is that which can be thus used always of the most exalted character *as* poetry. The composition of psalms and hymns is a separate poetic art; and though there are specimens, in the hymns in these languages, of the highest kind of lyric excellence, yet it is to be admitted that a large portion of that species of literature would scarcely be regarded as even *respectable*, if it related to other subjects than religion. Of the Hebrews, however, this is their *all*. They have no other poetry whatever. They have none merely amatory or pastoral which will compare with the Bucolics of Virgil, or with much of the poetry of Burns. Their poetry of the religious kind, also, is all of a high order. There is none that can be placed on the same low level with much that is found in the hymn books of most denominations of Christians—very good; very pious; very sentimental; very much adapted, as is supposed, to excite the feelings of devotion—but withal so flat, so weak, so unpoetic, that it would not, in a volume of mere poetry, be admitted to a third or fourth rank, if, indeed, it would find a place at all. It is for him who rejects the idea of *inspiration*, as applied to the Book of Psalms, to account for this fact.

(*b*) The Book of Psalms is a record of deep religious experience. It is this which, in the estimation of religious persons in general, gives it its chief value. It is the guide of young believers; and it becomes more and more the companion, the comforter, and the counsellor, as the believer moves along through the varied scenes of life, and as grey hairs come upon him, and as the infirmities, which pre-intimate the approaching close of all things, press him down. A religious man is rarely, if ever, placed in circumstances where he will not find something in the Psalms appropriate to his circumstances; where he will not find that the Hebrew sacred bard has not gone before him in the depths of religious experience. Hence, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in old age, on the bed of death, the Book of Psalms becomes so invariable and so valuable a companion; and hence, not as a matter of convenience, but as supplying a *want* in the minds of men, and as significant of their value, the Psalms and the New Testament are so often bound together in a single volume. Hence, also, for the aged, for the sick, for those whose powers of vision fail by disease or by years, the Psalms and the New Testament are printed in large type, and bound

in convenient forms, that the truths contained in these volumes may be still accessible to the saint ripening for heaven, as the light fails, and as life ebbs away. To the end of the world the Psalms in religious experience will occupy the same place which they now occupy; to the end of the world they will impart comfort to the troubled, and peace to the dying, as they have done in the ages that are past.

§ 8. *The qualifications for preparing a Commentary on the Psalms.*

It is an undoubted fact that there have been more failures in the Commentaries on the Book of Psalms than on any other of the books of the Bible. As yet there has been no Commentary that has met the wants of the Christian world; there are none, whatever anticipations may have been raised, which can be read without feelings of disappointment. For this fact there must be a cause; and that cause is probably to be found in the very peculiar qualifications needed to produce a Commentary on the Psalms:—qualifications which are rarely to be found united in the same person.

A few remarks on the qualifications necessary for preparing such a Commentary may explain the cause of the failures which have occurred; and may, perhaps, also explain the reason why the one now submitted to the public may be found to be an addition to the failures already existing. Every man who prepares a Commentary on the Psalms will probably, at the close of his work, be sensible of a feeling of disappointment in what he had hoped, perhaps what he had expected to do, and will share fully in the feelings of his readers that what is thus submitted to the world is very far from being what a Commentary on this portion of the sacred Scriptures ought to be.

The peculiar qualifications for preparing a Commentary on the Psalms are such as the following:—

(1.) A knowledge of the Hebrew language, particularly as it is affected by the laws of poetry which prevailed among the Hebrews. In all languages there are peculiar rules of poetry; rules by which the sense of the words used is affected, and by which peculiar shades of thought are expressed. In most languages, words have a *poetic* and a *prosaic* sense; and the application of the meaning of a word as used in prose to a passage in poetry might by no means express the idea which was in the mind of the poet. We learn almost insensibly, in reading a language familiar to us, to make this distinction accurately, even when we could not explain it; and we read a psalm, a hymn, a lyric song, without mistaking the meaning. But it is another thing when one undertakes to read a book of poetry in a language different from his native tongue. What is obvious to an Italian, a Frenchman, or a German, in reading poetry in his native

language, becomes a matter of difficult acquisition when an Englishman attempts to read the poem. The same thing is true in studying a dead language. It need not be said that there is a peculiar literature in respect to the Greek and Latin poets; and he who can read Herodotus or Livy cannot assume that he has such a full knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages as to qualify him to understand the poetry in those languages. So much depends often on rhythm, on the poetic forms of words, or on the images peculiar to poetry, that a classical education is not complete, nor is the student qualified to apprehend the meaning of the language of a poem, or to appreciate the beauties of its thought and imagery until he has mastered this most difficult part of the rules of language. That the Hebrews, like other people, had such rules and usages, there can be no doubt; for they are to be found in all languages, and there is abundant evidence in the Hebrew poetry itself that they existed among the Jewish people. Yet it may be doubted whether it is possible now so fully to recover the knowledge of those rules and usages as to apply them perfectly in the explanation of the poetic portions of the sacred writings. Much pertaining to the rhythm of the language, much relating to the accents, much connected with the peculiar use of words, it may be impossible now to recover. To show the difficulty of this subject in its bearing on the interpretation of the Psalms, as well as to illustrate the subject of Hebrew poetry, I may refer to the remarks of De Wette, Einleitung, vii. pp. 37—76. An elegant translation of this may be found in the Biblical Repository, vol. iii., pp. 478—514.

(2.) True piety is essential to qualify one to be an interpreter of the Psalms. This is true, in fact, in regard to the interpretation of any portion of the Sacred Volume. As the Bible is a book of religion, employed in describing the nature, the power, and the influence of religion, it is obvious that correct religious feeling, or a practical acquaintance with religion, is necessary in an interpreter. The principle is substantially the same which is required in the interpretation of books on any subject. In a treatise on painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, there will be things which could not be so well explained as by one who had a practical knowledge of these arts; and in order to the possession of a complete qualification for the interpretation of such a book, an ability to appreciate what is said on those arts must be regarded as indispensable. It is obvious that the mere knowledge of words—of philology—would not be all that would be demanded; nor would any power of explaining local allusions, laws, customs, manners, or geographical or historical references, be all that would be required. Beyond all this, there was in the mind of the writer or author that which he *intended* to express,

and which no mere knowledge of language or of customs would be sufficient to explain. To show what the writer *meant* it would be obviously necessary to be able to *understand* him,—to appreciate what he intended to say; to bring out what was *in* his mind; what he thought of—what he felt—what he designed to express. Hence, however valuable a work may be on the Psalms as a philological work, or as illustrating the authorship of a psalm, and the circumstances of the author in its composition, it is plain that we have not reached the main thing unless we have entered into the spirit of the author, and are qualified to understand and appreciate his own feelings in the composition.

(3.) For the reason above stated, there should be in an exposition of the Psalms more than the *mere* possession of piety. *There should be deep religious experience.* There should be an acquaintance with piety in its highest forms of rapture, and in the lowest depths of despondency, darkness, and sorrow. There is no book in the world in which there are such varied expressions of piety, in which there are such diversified forms of religious experience, as in the Book of Psalms. As the Psalms were designed for every age of the world; for persons found in every rank and condition of life; for seasons of joy and of sorrow; for childhood, youth, middle age, old age; for the ignorant and the learned; for times of sickness and of health; for private, social, domestic, and public life; for magistrates and private citizens; for war and peace; for acts of business and acts of charity; for the living and for the dying, and for those that mourn,—so they were designed to form a *manual* that would illustrate religion in all these forms and relations; to be a book in which *any* one, in all the varied conditions of human existence, might be sure that he would find something that would be applicable to himself. If this is so, then it is clear that in order to a good Commentary on the Psalms,—in order that the expositor may be able to enter into the real spirit of the work which he undertakes to explain,—piety of no common order is demanded; a rich and varied religious experience is required that falls to the lot of very few of mankind. Looking simply at *this* qualification of a commentator on the Psalms, we may cease to be surprised that no such Commentary has ever appeared as to leave nothing yet to be desired.

(4.) Poetic taste is an important requisite in a commentator on the Psalms. The Psalms are poetry, and poetry of the most delicate kind. Much of the beauty of the Psalms, and much of their adaptedness to the wants of man, depends on the fact that they *are* poetry. This was a reason why the Spirit of God, in breathing his influence on the men who composed the Psalms, preferred that the sentiments

found in them *should be* expressed in poetry rather than in prose, and hence this medium was selected. Among the original endowments of the human mind, that which contemplates *poetry* as among the means of happiness; as adapted to impress truth on the mind; as fitted to arouse the soul to great efforts; as designed to fill the mind with calm, peaceful, pure, patriotic, pious emotions, is one. Possessed by men, indeed (either in the power of producing poetry or of appreciating it) in very different degrees, yet it *is* an endowment of man; and, being such, religion makes use of it to promote its own ends. There are those who will be moved by little besides calm argument, stern logic, severe demonstration; there are those who will be aroused only by the lofty appeals of eloquence; there are those who will be most influenced by the voice of persuasion; there are those who will be awakened from dangerous slumbers only by the denunciations of wrath; there are those in whose minds pure and joyful and holy emotions will be best excited by poetry. It is the province of *song*, as such, to awaken many of the most pure and devoted feelings of piety in the human soul; and the Book of Psalms is the portion of the Sacred Volume by which it is designed and expected that this object will be accomplished as a permanent arrangement.

It is clear, therefore, that he cannot be completely qualified to be a commentator on the Psalms who has not himself such endowments as to appreciate the beauties of poetry; who cannot, in this respect, enter into the feelings of the sacred writer on the one hand, and into the hearts of those who are so made as to be affected by poetry on the other. One of the causes of the *failure* to produce a good Commentary on the Psalms may be traced to this source. A mere philologist; a man who regards nothing as valuable but exact demonstration; a man of prosaic temperament, though he may have piety that is exalted and pure, *may* lack still an important qualification for entering into the true spirit of the Psalms, and for meeting the wants of those who seek for edification and comfort in this portion of the Bible.

(5.) A knowledge of the human heart—of human nature—is an indispensable condition for a good commentator on the Psalms. The Psalms comprise, more than any other book in the Bible, a record of the workings of the heart. Indeed, they pertain mostly *to* the heart. They are not addressed, as the Epistle to the Romans is, to the loftier powers of the understanding, nor do they make such appeals to the imagination as the visions of Isaiah, or the visions of John in Patmos. It is the *heart* which, in the Psalms, is eminently the medium of communication between the Divine Spirit and the soul.

Of all parts of the Bible there is most to illustrate the human heart in the Psalms. All that there is in the heart of man is there in one way or another illustrated, and in an almost endless variety of circumstances. Joy, sorrow, penitence, gratitude, praise, despondency, sadness; love—love to God—love to man;—the feelings experienced in sickness, and on a recovery from sickness;—the anguish, the bitterness of soul, arising from the ingratitude of others; terror at the wrath of God; the dread of death; the peace which religion gives in the prospect of death; the joy of prayer; the light which comes into the soul in answer to earnest supplication; the calmness which springs from devout meditation on the character of God and his law; the light which beams upon the soul after long darkness; the effects of remembered guilt (as in Ps. li.); the feeling of despair when God seems to have forsaken us; the feelings which spring up in the heart on the reception of injuries;—these are a few among the many topics which are found illustrated in the Psalms in the personal experience of the writers, and it is obvious that no one is qualified to comment on these subjects unless he has himself a knowledge of the workings of the human heart. To be able to explain the words used; to state the origin and authorship of the Psalms, and the occasion on which they were composed; to investigate the genuineness and accuracy of the text, and to determine the value of the varied readings; to understand and explain the parallelisms, the rhythm, and the accents employed in the Psalms; to comprehend and appreciate the poetry of the Psalms; or to gather together what Jewish Rabbies and the Christian Fathers have written, or to transplant from Germany what has been produced under Rationalistic views of the Bible, or even what the German mind in its best workings and under the influence of true religion has produced, is *not* all or mainly what is demanded in a Commentary on the Psalms that will meet the wants of those in our own land, or that will illustrate the Psalms in the manner that will be of most value to the great masses of the young, the sick, the bereaved, the tempted, the aged, and the desponding. A man who cannot in this varied manner enter into sympathy with the writers of the Psalms in the workings of the human heart as there illustrated, is not a man who is fully qualified to prepare a Commentary on this book. For some purposes he may, indeed, make a book that will be valuable, but not a book that will be valuable in relation to the real purpose designed to be accomplished by the Psalms—to be a guide and a comfort to believers of every station and condition, in all the varied circumstances of human life, and in all the varied and complicated workings of the human heart.

(6) It may be added that the Book of Psalms, in the main, is so plain, so easy to be understood by the great mass of readers; so expressive of the internal feelings and emotions, as to increase the difficulty in the preparation of a Commentary. The Psalms are so rich; so full of meaning; so adapted to the wants of believers;—they so meet the varied experiences of the people of God, and are so replete with the illustrations of piety; they so touch the deepest fountains of emotion in the soul, that, so far as most of these points are concerned, a *Commentary*, considered as an additional source of light, does not differ materially from a candle considered as affording additional splendour to the sun. What a man finds in the ordinary perusal of the Psalms as a book of devotion, on the subject of deep experimental piety, is so much in advance of what he will usually find in the Commentary, that he turns from the attempt to *explain* them with a feeling of deep disappointment, and comes back to the Book itself as better expressing his emotions, meeting his necessities, and imparting consolation in trial, than anything which the commentator can add. He welcomes the Book of Psalms itself as a comforter and a guide; and in the little volume sold now at so cheap a rate, or appended to his pocket Testament, the common reader of the Bible finds more that is suited to his need than he would in the voluminous commentary of Venema; in all the collections in the Critici Sacri; in the Synopsis of Poole; in the Annotations of Grotius; or in the learned expositions of De Wette—elegant as the work of De Wette is,—or of Tholuck, or Hengstenberg.

When these difficulties in composing a Commentary on the Psalms are considered;—when a man who sits down to write one reflects on the qualifications necessary for the task;—and when under the influence of these thoughts, constantly increasing in magnitude, and pressing upon him more and more as he labours for a dozen years, though at intervals, as I have done, in preparing a Commentary on this portion of Scripture,—whatever ardour of desire or confidence of success he may have had at the commencement of his enterprise, he will cease to wonder, as he progresses in his work, that the efforts of others to prepare a Commentary heretofore have been a failure, and he will not be surprised, should his life be lengthened out to see the result of his own labours, if he finds that the world regards that at which he has toiled so long, and which he hoped might be, in some measure, worthy of the Volume he has undertaken to explain, as but adding another to the long list of unsuccessful attempts to prepare a proper exposition of the Book of Psalms.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

PSALM I.

THE first psalm has no title prefixed to it, which is the case, also, with many others, Ps. x., cxvi., cxvii., etc. It is now in vain to attempt to search for the cause of this omission. On the origin and authority of the titles prefixed to the Psalms, see Introduct., § 4. Some have supposed that the reason why no title was affixed to this psalm was that the *general title*, "The Psalms of David," was prefixed to the whole book, and that that was a sufficient indication of the author of this the first in the series. But this is mere conjecture, and this reason would no more make proper the omission of the title to the first psalm than of any other that came under that *general* title. In some manuscripts (2 Codd. de Rossi) this psalm is not numbered; in some others (4 Codd. Kennic., and 3 de Rossi) it is united with the second psalm, and the two are reckoned as one. It is, however, manifestly a distinct composition from the second psalm. It has a unity of its own, as the second has also; and there are almost no two psalms in the whole collection which might not be united with as much propriety as these. It is impossible now to ascertain the authorship of the psalm, though the common opinion is probably the correct one, that it was composed by David. But on what occasion it was written it is now equally impossible to discover. There are no historical allusions in it which would enable us to determine the occasion on which it was written, as there is nothing in it which certainly determines its authorship. The terms employed are of the most general character, and the sentiments are applicable to all times and all lands. It has all the marks of being a general introduction to the *Book* of Psalms, and of having been designed to express in a few sentences the substance of the entire collection, or to state the great principle which would be found to run through the whole of it—*that a righteous life will be attended with prosperity and happiness, and that the life of the wicked will be followed by sorrow and ruin.* This was the great principle of the Jewish Theocracy; and was of sufficient importance to be stated clearly in the commencement of a book that was designed to illustrate so fully the nature and the value of true religion. Comp. Deut. xxvii., xxviii.

The psalm is designed to describe the blessedness or the happiness of the righteous man. This is done "literally and figuratively, positively and negatively, directly and by contrast, with respect both to his character and his condition here and hereafter."—*Professor Alexander.* It is not, however, as Professor Alexander supposes, a "picture of the truly *happy* man;" it is a description of the blessedness of the *righteous* man, in contrast with the condition of the *unrighteous.* The righteous man is indeed prosperous and happy; and it is one design of the psalm to show this. But it is not the *happy* man, as such, that is in the eye of the psalmist; it is the *righteous* man, and the blessedness of *being* righteous.

The psalm is properly made up of two parts—the blessedness of the righteous man, and the unblessedness, *unglück* (*De Wette*), of the wicked or ungodly man.

I. The blessedness of the righteous man, vers. 1—3. This consists also of two minor parts:—

(1.) His character (vers. 1, 2), and this is described also in two forms—negatively and positively.

(*a*) Negatively.—He does *not* walk in the counsel of the ungodly, *nor* stand in the way of sinners, *nor* sit in the seat of the scornful, ver. 1.

(*b*) Positively.—He delights in the law of the Lord, and he has pleasure in meditating continually on his truth, ver. 2.

(2) His prosperity, as the result of being righteous, ver. 3. His condition is compared with that of a tree planted in a well-watered place, whose leaves are always green, and whose fruit never fails; so whatever he does shall prosper.

II. The condition of the unrighteous, or the strong contrast between the un-

PSALM I.

BLESSED *is* the man that

a Prov. iv. 14, 15.

walketh not [a] in the counsel of the [1] ungodly, nor standeth in the way

[1] Or, *wicked.*

righteous and the righteous, vers. 4—6. Their condition and destiny are expressed in three forms:—

(1) They are like chaff which the wind drives away, ver. 4.

(2) They shall not be acquitted in the judgment, nor have a place among the righteous, ver. 5.

(3) They shall not be approved by God, but shall perish, ver. 6.

1. *Blessed* is *the man.* That is, his condition is a happy or a desirable one. The word here used, אַשְׁרֵי, *aishair,* means properly *happiness* or *blessedness.* It is found, however, only in the plural form and in the construct state, and takes the nature and force of an interjection—"O the happiness of the man!" or "O happy man!" Deut. xxxiii. 29: "*Happy* art thou, O Israel!" 1 Kings x. 8: "*Happy* are thy men, *happy* are these thy servants!" Job v. 17: "*Happy* is the man whom God correcteth!" Ps. ii. 12: "*Blessed* are all they that put their trust in him!" See also Ps. xxxii. 1, 2; xxxiii. 12; xxxiv. 8; xl. 4; xli. 1; lxv. 4; lxxxiv. 4, 5, 12, *et al.,* where it is rendered *blessed.* The word is of the most *general* character, and, in itself, would embrace all that is supposed to constitute *real happiness.* The particular kind of blessedness referred to here, as explained in the subsequent part of the psalm, consists in the fact that he avoids the companionship of the wicked; that he has pleasure in the law of the Lord; that he will be prospered in this world; and that he will not perish at last. The word "*man*" here, also, is of the most general character, and is designed to include all men, of all times and of all conditions, who possess the *character* referred to. The term is applicable to the poor as well as to the rich; to the low as well as to the exalted; to the servant as well as to the master; alike to the aged, the middle-aged, and the young. All who have the character here described come under the general description of the *happy man*—the man whose condition is a happy and a desirable one. ¶ *That walketh not.* Whose character is that he does not walk in the manner specified. Professor Alexander renders this, "Who *has not* walked." But it implies more than this; it refers to more than the past. It is the characteristic of the man, always and habitually, that he does not thus walk; it has not only been true in the past, but it is true in the present, and will be true in the future. It is that which distinguishes the man. The word *walk* is often used in the Scriptures to denote a way of life or conduct—since life is represented as a journey, and man as a traveller. Ps. xv. 2: "Who walketh uprightly." Compare 1 Kings ix. 4; Deut. xix. 9; xxviii. 9; Ps. lxxxi. 12, 13; Isa. xxxiii. 15. ¶ *In the counsel.* After the manner, the principles, the plans of this class of men. He does not *take counsel* of them as to the way in which he should live, but from the law of the Lord, ver. 2. This would include such things as these:—he does not follow the *advice* of sinners, 2 Sam. xvi. 20; 1 Kings i. 12; he does not execute the *purposes* or *plans* of sinners, Isa. xix. 3; he does not frame his life according to their views and suggestions. In his plans and purposes of life he is independent of *them,* and looks to some other source for the rules to guide him. ¶ *Of the ungodly.* The wicked. The word here used is general, and would embrace all kinds and degrees of the unrighteous. It is not so specific, and would, in itself, not indicate as definite, or as aggravated depravity, as the terms which follow. The general sentiment here is, that the man referred to is not the companion of wicked men. ¶ *Nor standeth.* This indicates more deliberation; a character more fixed and decided. ¶ *In the way.* The path where they are

of sinners, nor sitteth[b] in the seat of the scornful:

[b] Jer. xv. 17.

found, or where they usually go. His standing there would be as if he waited for them, or as if he desired to be associated with them. Instead of passing along in his own regular and proper employment, he stations himself in the path where sinners usually go, and lingers and loiters there. Thus he indicates a *desire* to be with them. This is often, in fact, illustrated by men who place themselves, as if they had nothing to do, in the usual situation where the wicked pass along, or where they may be met with at the corners of the streets in a great city. ¶ *Of sinners,* חַטָּאִים, *hattayim.* This word means literally, *those who miss the mark;* then, those who err from the path of duty or rectitude. It is often used to denote any kind or degree of sin. It is more specific than the former word rendered *ungodly,* as denoting those who depart from the path of duty; who fail in regard to the great end of life; who violate positive and known obligations. ¶ *Nor sitteth.* This implies still greater deliberation and determination of character than either of the other words employed. The man here referred to does not casually and accidentally walk along with them, nor put himself in their way by standing where they are ordinarily to be found; but he has become one of them by occupying a seat with them; thus deliberately associating with them. He has an established residence among the wicked; he is permanently one of their number. ¶ *In the seat.* The seat which the scornful usually occupy; the place where such men converse and sit together—as in a ball-room, or in a "club," where wicked men hold their meetings, or where infidels and scoffers are accustomed to assemble. ¶ *Of the scornful,* לֵצִים, *laitzim.* This word properly means those who mock, deride, scoff; those who treat virtue and religion with contempt and scorn. Prov. i. 22; iii. 34; ix. 7, 8; xiii. 1; xv. 12, *et sæpe.* It denotes a higher and more determined grade of wickedness than either of the other words employed, and refers to the consummation of a depraved character, the last stage of wickedness, when God and sacred things are treated with contempt and derision. There is hope of a man as long as he will treat virtue and religion with some degree of respect; there is little or none when he has reached the point in his own character in which virtue and piety are regarded only as fit subjects for ridicule and scorn. We have here, then, a beautiful double gradation or climax, in the nouns and verbs of this verse, indicating successive stages of character. There is, first, casual *walking* with the wicked, or accidentally falling into their company; there is then a more deliberate inclination for their society, indicated by a voluntary putting of oneself in places where they usually congregate, and *standing* to wait for them; and then there is a deliberate and settled purpose of associating with them, or of becoming permanently one of them, by regularly *sitting* among them. So also it is in regard to the *persons* with whom they associate. They are, first, irreligious men in general; then, those who have so far advanced in depravity as to disregard known duty, and to violate known obligations; and then, those who become confirmed in infidelity, and who openly mock at virtue, and scoff at the claims of religion. It is unnecessary to say that, in both these respects, this is an accurate description of what actually occurs in the world. He who casually and accidentally walks with the wicked, listening to their *counsel,* will soon learn to place himself in their way, and to wait for them, desiring their society, and will ultimately be likely to be found identified with open scoffers; and he who indulges in one form of depravity, or

2 But his delight[c] *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law[d] doth he meditate day and night.

c Job xxiii. 12.

d Ps. cxix. 97.

in the neglect of religion in any way, will, unless restrained and converted, be likely to run through every grade of wickedness, until he becomes a confirmed scoffer at all religion. The sentiment in this verse is, that the man who is truly blessed is a man who does none of these things. His associations and preferences are found elsewhere, as is stated in the next verse.

2. *But his delight.* His pleasure; his happiness. Instead of finding his happiness in the society and the occupations of the wicked, he finds it in the truth of God. The law or truth of God is not distasteful to him, but he so delights in it as to desire to become more and more acquainted with it, and to have its truths impressed more and more on his heart. ¶ *In the law of the* LORD. The law of JEHOVAH—the small capitals in the translation indicating here as elsewhere that the original word is JEHOVAH. The word *law* in the Scriptures is used in a considerable variety of significations. The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה, *torah*, properly means *instruction, precept;* and then, an injunction, command, law, in the usual sense of the word. It was applied particularly to the Pentateuch, or law of Moses (comp. Notes on Luke xxiv. 44), as containing the first written and recorded laws of God; and then the word came, in a more general sense, to be applied to all the books of the Old Testament, as being an exposition and application of the law. Here the word undoubtedly refers to the written revelation of the will of God as far as it was then made known. On the same principle, however, the declaration here made would apply to any part of a Divine revelation; and hence the sentiment is, that a truly pious man finds his highest delight in the revealed truths of God. This is often referred to as characteristic of true piety. Comp. Ps. xix. 10; cxix. 97, 99. ¶ *And in his law.* On his law, or his truth. ¶ *He doth meditate.* The word here used, הָגָה, *hagah*, means properly to murmur, to mutter; then, to speak; then, to utter in a low murmuring voice, as is often done by a person in deep meditation; hence, in the usual sense, to meditate on anything; to think of it. So Joshua i. 8: "Thou shalt *meditate* therein [the law] day and night." Ps. lxxvii. 12: "I *meditate* on all thy work." Prov. xv. 28: "The heart of the righteous *meditateth* what to answer." The meaning here is, he thinks of it; he endeavours to understand its meaning; he has pleasure in reflecting on it. It is not a subject which he puts away from him, or in respect to which he is indifferent, but he keeps it before his mind, and has satisfaction in doing it. ¶ *Day and night.* That is, continually—as day and night constitute the whole of time. The meaning is—(*a*) he does this *habitually*, or he intentionally forms the *habit* of meditating on Divine truth, by disciplining his mind in order that he may do it; (*b*) he *takes* time to do it—designedly setting apart suitable portions of each day, that, withdrawn from the cares of life, he may refresh his spirit by contemplating Divine truth, or may become better acquainted with God, and with his duty to him, and may bring to bear upon his own soul more directly the truths pertaining to eternal realities; (*c*) he does this in the intervals of business, the moments of leisure which he may have during the day—having thus an unfailing subject of reflection to which his mind readily reverts, and in which, amid the cares and toils of life, he finds relaxation and comfort; and (*d*) he does it in the wakeful hours of night, when sick and tossed upon his bed, or when, for any other reason, his "eyes are held waking." Ps. lxiii. 5, 6: "My soul shall be

3 And he shall be like a tree [e] planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall

[e] Jer. xvii. 8.

satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches." Ps. cxix. 54: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Comp. vers. 23, 48; Ps. cxliii. 5. It is probable that the psalmist had the injunction in his mind which is contained in Josh. i. 8.

3. *And he shall be like a tree.* A description of the happiness or prosperity of the man who thus avoids the way of sinners, and who delights in the law of God, now follows. This is presented in the form of a very beautiful image—a tree planted where its roots would have abundance of water. ¶ *Planted by the rivers of water.* It is not a tree that springs up spontaneously, but one that is set out in a favorable place, and that is cultivated with care. The word "*rivers*" does not here quite express the sense of the original. The Hebrew word (פְּלָגִים *peleg*, from פָּלַג *palag*, to cleave, to split, to divide), properly means *divisions;* and then, channels, canals, trenches, branching-cuts, brooks. The allusion is to the Oriental method of irrigating their lands by making artificial rivulets to convey the water from a larger stream, or from a lake. In this way the water was distributed in all directions. The whole land of Egypt was anciently sluiced in this manner, and it was in this way that its extraordinary fertility was secured. An illustration of the passage may be derived from the account by Maundrell of the method of watering the gardens and orchards in the vicinity of Damascus. "The gardens are thick set with fruit trees of all kinds, kept fresh and verdant by the waters of the Barady....This river, as soon as it issues out of the cleft of the mountain before mentioned, into the plain, is immediately divided into three streams, of which the middlemost and largest runs directly to Damascus, and is distributed to all the cisterns and fountains of the city. The other two, which I take to be the work of art, are drawn round, the one to the right, and the other to the left, on the borders of the gardens, into which they are let out, as they pass, by little rivulets, and so dispersed over all the vast wood, insomuch that there is not a garden but has a fine, quick stream running through it." Trav., p. 122. A striking allusion to trees cultivated in this manner occurs in Ezek. xxxi. 3, 4: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with his rivers running round about his plants, and sent out his little rivers unto all the trees of the field." So Eccles. ii. 4: "I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." No particular kind of tree is referred to in the passage before us, but there are abundant illustrations of the passage in the rows of willow, oranges, &c., that stand on the banks of these artificial streams in the East. The image is that of a tree abundantly watered, and that was flourishing. ¶ *That bringeth forth his fruit in his season.* Whose fruit does not fall by the want of nutriment. The idea is that of a tree which, at the proper season of the year, is loaded with fruit. Comp. Ps. xcii. 14. The image is one of great beauty. The fruit is not untimely. It does not ripen and fall too soon, or fall before it is mature; and the crop is abundant. ¶ *His leaf also shall not wither.* By drought and heat. Comp. Notes on Job viii. 16; xv. 32. It is green and flourishing—a striking image of a happy and a prosperous man. ¶ *And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* This is a literal statement of what had

not [1] wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

[1] Or, *fade*.

4 The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff [f] which the wind driveth away.

[f] Matt. iii. 12.

just been put in a figurative or poetic form. It contains a *general* truth, or contains an affirmation as to the natural and proper effect of religion, or of a life of piety, and is similar to that which occurs in 1 Tim. iv. 8: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This idea of the effect of a life of piety is one that is common in the Scriptures, and is sustained by the regular course of events. If a man desires *permanent* prosperity and happiness, it is to be found only in the ways of virtue and religion. The word "whatsoever" here is to be taken in a *general* sense, and the proper laws of interpretation do not require that we should explain it as *universally* true. It is conceivable that a righteous man—a man profoundly and sincerely fearing God—may sometimes form plans that will not be wise; it is conceivable that he may lose his wealth, or that he may be involved in the calamities that come upon a people in times of commercial distress, in seasons of war, of famine, and pestilence; it is conceivable that he may be made to suffer loss by the fraud and dishonesty of other men; but still as a general and as a most important truth, a life of piety will be followed by prosperity, and will constantly impart happiness. It is this great and important truth which it is the main design of the Book of Psalms to illustrate.

4. *The ungodly* are *not so*. Literally, "Not thus the wicked." For the word *ungodly*, see Notes on ver. 1. The statement that the "wicked are not so," is a general statement applicable alike to their character and destiny, though the mind of the author of the psalm is fixed immediately and particularly on the difference in their *destiny*, without specifying anything particularly respecting their *character*. It is as true, however, that the ungodly do walk in the counsel of the wicked, and stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful, as it is that the righteous do not; as true that they do *not* delight in the law of the Lord, as it is that the righteous do; as true that the wicked are *not* like a tree planted by the channels of water, as it is that the righteous are. This passage, therefore, may be employed to show what is the character of the ungodly, and in so applying it, what was before *negative* in regard to the righteous, becomes *positive* in regard to the wicked; what was positive, becomes negative. Thus it is true (*a*) that the wicked *do* walk in the counsel of the ungodly; *do* stand in the way of sinners; *do* sit in the seat of the scornful; (*b*) that they do *not* delight in the law of the Lord, or meditate on his word; and (*c*) that they are *not* like a tree planted by the waters, that is green and beautiful and fruitful. Both in character and in destiny the ungodly differ from the righteous. The subsequent part of the verse shows that, while the general truth was in the mind of the writer, the particular thing on which his attention was fixed was, his condition in life—his destiny—as that which could not be compared with a green and fruitful tree, but which suggested quite another image. ¶ *But* are *like the chaff which the wind driveth away*. When the wheat was winnowed. This, in Oriental countries, was commonly performed in the open field, and usually on an eminence, and where there was a strong wind. The operation was performed, as it is now in our country, when a fan or fanning-mill cannot be procured, by throwing up the grain as it is threshed with a shovel, and the wind scatters the chaff, while the grain falls to the ground. See Notes on Matt. iii. 12. The following cut will furnish an

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand [g] in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

[g] Matt. xxv. 41, 46.

illustration of this as practised in Oriental countries:



AN ANCIENT MODE OF WINNOWING.

This very naturally and appropriately furnished an illustration of the destiny of the wicked. Compared with the righteous, they were like the worthless chaff driven away by the wind. The image is often found in the Scriptures. See Notes on Job xxi. 18; Isa. xvii. 13. Comp. also Ps. xxxv. 5; Isa. xxix. 5; xli. 15; Dan. ii. 35; Hos. xiii. 3. The idea here is, that the wicked are in no respect like the green and fruitful tree referred to in ver. 3. They are not like a tree in *any* respect. They are not even like a decaying tree, a barren tree, a dead tree, for either of these would suggest some idea of stability or permanency. They are like dry and worthless chaff driven off by the wind, as of no value to the farmer—a substance which he is anxious only to separate wholly from his grain, and to get out of his way. The idea thus suggested, therefore, is that of intrinsic worthlessness. It will be, among other things, on this account that the wicked will be driven away—that they are worthless in the universe of God—worthless to all the purposes for which man was made. At the same time, however, there may be an implied contrast between that chaff and the useful grain which it is the object of the farmer to secure.

5. *Therefore.* Because they are thus worthless. ¶ *The ungodly.* See Notes on ver. 1. The wicked in general; the wicked of any kind or degree. ¶ *Shall not stand.* Comp. Notes on ver. 1. The idea is, that they will not be found among those who are acquitted by the Judge, and approved by him. The idea seems to be derived from the act of standing up to be tried, or to receive a sentence. ¶ *In the judgment.* The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, "in the great day"—understanding it of the day of judgment. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "the wicked shall not *rise*—ἀναστήσονται—*resurgent*—in judgment." Most of the Jewish interpreters, following the Chaldee Paraphrase, understand this as referring to the last judgment. *Rosenmüller, in loc.* The truth stated, however, seems to be more *general* than that, though that is probably included. The meaning is, that they would not share the lot of the righteous: in all places, and at all times, where character is determined, and where the Divine estimate of human character is manifested, it would be found that they could not stand the trial, or abide the result, so as to have a place with the righteous. Their true character would in all such cases be shown, and they would be treated like the chaff that is driven away. This would be true alike in those situations of trial in the present life when character is determined, and at the last judgment, when the sentence will be pronounced which will determine the final doom of mankind. ¶ *Nor sinners.* See Notes on ver. 1. ¶ *In the congregation of the righteous.* Be reckoned or regarded as belonging to the righteous. That is, in all the places where the righteous,

6 For the LORD knoweth [h] the way of the righteous: but the way [i] of the ungodly shall perish.

h Job xxiii. 10.

i Prov. xv. 9.

as such, are assembled, they will have no place: where they assemble to worship God; where they meet as his friends; where they unitedly participate in his favour; when, in the last day, they shall be gathered together to receive their reward, and when they shall be assembled together in heaven. The sinner has no place in the congregations of the people of God.

6. *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.* This is given as a *reason* why the wicked would not stand in the judgment with the righteous. The reason is, that the Lord, the great Judge, fully understands the character of those who are his friends, and can discriminate between them and all others, whatever pretences others may make to that character. Only those whom God approves, and loves, as his friends, will be able to stand in the day when the great decision shall be made. No one can impose on him by any mere pretensions to piety; no one can force his way to his favour, or to the rewards of the just, by power; no one can claim this in virtue of rank and station. No one can be admitted to the favour of God, and to the rewards of heaven, whose character is not such that it will bear the scrutiny of the Omniscient eye. Comp. Notes on 2 Tim. ii. 19. Man may be deceived in judging character, but God is not. When it is said that "the Lord knoweth *the way* of the righteous," the word *way* seems to be used to denote the whole of life—the manner of living (Notes, ver. 1), and hence the whole character. Perhaps there is included also the idea that the Lord knows the *result* of their manner of life—the issue to which it leads—and that, therefore, he can properly judge the righteous and assign them to that place in the future world, to wit, heaven, to which their actions tend. ¶ *But the way of the ungodly shall perish.* The way or manner in which the ungodly live shall tend to ruin; their plans, and purposes, and hopes, shall come to nought. Their course, in fact, tends to destruction. None of their plans shall prosper in regard to religion; none of their hopes shall be fulfilled. In this, as in all other respects, they stand in strong contrast with the righteous, alike in this world and the world to come.

PSALM II.

§ 1. *The author.*—This psalm, like the one preceding, is without any title prefixed to it, and, like that, is without anything in the psalm itself to indicate its authorship. Its authorship must be learned, therefore, elsewhere, if it can be ascertained at all. There is, however, every reason to suppose that David was the author; and by those who admit the authority of the New Testament this will not be doubted. The reasons for supposing that its authorship is to be traced to David are the following:—(*a*) It is expressly ascribed to him in Acts iv. 25, 26: "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" etc. There can be no doubt that this psalm is here referred to, and the quotation in this manner proves that this was the common understanding among the Jews. It may be presumed that in a matter of this kind the general tradition would be likely to be correct; and to those who admit the inspiration of the apostles as bearing on points like this, the fact of its being quoted as the production of David is decisive. (*b*) This is the common opinion respecting its origin among Hebrew writers. Kimchi and Aben Ezra expressly ascribe it to David, and they are supposed in this to express the prevailing opinion of the Hebrew people. (*c*) Its place among the Psalms of David may, perhaps, be regarded as a circumstance indicating the same thing. Thus, to the seventy-second psalm there are none which are ascribed expressly to any other author than David (except the fiftieth psalm, which is ascribed to Asaph, or '*for* Asaph,' as it is in the margin), though there are

several whose authors are not mentioned; and the common impression has been that this portion of the Book of Psalms was arranged in this manner *because* they were understood by the collector of the Psalms to have been composed by him. (*d*) The character of the composition accords well with this supposition. It is true, indeed, that nothing can be certainly inferred from this consideration respecting its authorship; and that it must be admitted that there are no such peculiarities in the style as to *prove* that David is the author. But the remark now made is, that there is nothing inconsistent with this supposition, and that there is nothing in the sentiment, the style, or the allusions, which might not have flowed from his pen, or which would not be appropriate on the supposition that he was the author. The only objection that could be urged to this would be derived from ver. 6, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." But this will be considered in another place.

§ 2. *The time when written.*—As we cannot with absolute certainty determine who was the author, it is, of course, not possible to ascertain the exact time when it was composed; nor, if it be admitted that David was the author, can we now ascertain what was the occasion on which it was written. There are no *names* of the kings and people who are represented as conspiring against the Anointed One who is the chief subject of the psalm; and there is no local allusion whatever except in the single phrase the "hill of Zion," in ver. 6. The probability would seem to be that the psalm was not designed to refer to anything which had occurred in the time of the author himself, but, as will be seen in another part of these introductory remarks (§ 4), that the writer intended to refer mainly to the Messiah, who was to come in a distant age, although this may have been *suggested* by something which took place in the time of the writer. The opposition made to David himself by surrounding nations, their attempts to overwhelm the Hebrew people and himself as their king, the fact that God gave him the victory over his foes, and established him as the king of his people, and the prosperity and triumph which he had experienced, may have given rise to the ideas and imagery of the psalm, and may have led him to compose it with reference to the Messiah, between whose treatment and his own there would be so strong a resemblance, that the one might *suggest* the other. If conjecture may be allowed where it is impossible to be certain, it may be supposed that the psalm was composed by David after the termination of the wars in which he had been engaged with surrounding nations, and in which he had struggled for the establishment of his throne and kingdom; and after he had been peacefully and triumphantly established as ruler over the people of God. Then it would be natural to compare his own fortunes with those of the Son of God, the future Messiah, who was to be, in his human nature, his descendant; against whom the rulers of the earth would also "rage," as they had against himself; whom it was the purpose of God to establish on a permanent throne in spite of all opposition, as he had established *him* on *his* throne; and who was to sway a sceptre over the nations of the earth, of which the sceptre that *he* swayed might be regarded as an emblem. Thus understood, it had, in its original composition, no particular reference to David himself, or to Solomon, as Paulus supposed, or to any other of the kings of Israel; but it is to be regarded as having sole reference to the Messiah, in language *suggested* by events which had occurred in the history of David, the author. It is made up of the peaceful and happy reflections of one who had been engaged, in the face of much opposition, in establishing his own throne, now looking forward to the similar scenes of conflict and of triumph through which the Anointed One would pass.

§ 3. *The structure and contents of the psalm.*—The psalm is exceedingly regular in its composition, and has in its structure much of a dramatic character. It naturally falls into four parts, of three verses each.

I. In the first (vers. 1—3) the conduct and purposes of the raging nations are described. They are in the deepest agitation, forming plans against Jehovah and his Anointed One, and uniting their counsels to break their bands asunder, and to cast off their authority, that is, as ver. 6 shows, to prevent the establishment of the Anointed One as King on the holy hill of Zion. The opening of the psalm is bold and abrupt. The psalmist looks out suddenly on the nations, and *sees them* in violent commotion.

II. In the second part (vers. 4—6) the feelings and purposes of God are described. It is implied that he had formed

the purpose, by a fixed decree (comp. ver. 7), to establish his Anointed One as king, and he now calmly sits in the heavens and looks with derision on the vain designs of those who are opposed to it. He smiles upon their impotent rage, and goes steadily forward to the accomplishment of his plan. He solemnly declares that he had established his King on his holy hill of Zion, and consequently, that all their efforts must be vain.

III. In the third part (vers. 7—9) the King himself, the Anointed One, speaks, and states the decree which had been formed in reference to himself, and the promise which had been made to him. That decree was, that he should be declared to be the Son of Jehovah himself; the promise was that he should, at his own request, have the nations of the earth for a possession, and rule over them with an absolute sceptre.

IV. In the fourth part (vers. 10—12) the psalmist exhorts the rulers of the nations to yield to the claims of the Anointed One, threatening Divine wrath on those who should reject him, and promising a blessing on those who should put their trust in him.

The psalm is, therefore, regularly constructed, and the main thought is pursued through the whole of it—the exalted claims and ultimate triumph of him who is here called "the Anointed;" the vanity of opposition to his decrees; and the duty and advantage of yielding to his authority. "The several sentences are also very regular in form, exhibiting parallelisms of great uniformity."—*Professor Alexander*. The psalm, in its construction, is one of the most perfect in the book, according to the peculiar ideal of Hebrew poetry.

§ 4. *The question to whom the psalm refers.*—There can be but three opinions as to the question to whom the psalm was designed to refer: (*a*) That in which it is supposed that it refers exclusively to David, or to some other one of the anointed kings of Israel; (*b*) that in which it is supposed that it had this original reference, but has also a secondary reference to the Messiah; and (*c*) that in which it is supposed that it has *exclusive* and *sole* reference to the Messiah.

There are few who maintain the first of these opinions. Even Grotius, in respect to whom it was said, in comparison with Cocceius, that "Cocceius found Christ everywhere, and Grotius nowhere," admits that while, in his view the psalm had a primary reference to David, and to the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Idumeans, &c., as his enemies, yet, in a more "mystical and abstruse sense, it pertained to the Messiah." The *reasons* why the psalm should not be regarded as referring exclusively to any Hebrew king are conclusive. They are summed up in this one: that the expressions in the psalm are such as cannot be applied exclusively to *any* Hebrew monarch. This will appear in the exposition of this psalm. For like reasons, the psalm cannot be regarded as designed to refer primarily to David, and in a secondary and higher sense to the Messiah. There are no indications in the psalm of any such double sense; and if it cannot be applied exclusively to David, cannot be applied to him at all.

The psalm, I suppose, like Isa. liii., had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. This may be shown by the following considerations:—

(1) It is so applied in the New Testament, and is referred to in no other way. Thus, in Acts iv. 24—27, the whole company of the apostles is represented as quoting the first verses of the psalm, and referring them to Christ: "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God . . . who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." If the authority of the apostles, therefore, is to be admitted in the case, there can be no doubt that the psalm was intended to refer to the Messiah. This statement of the apostles may also be adduced as proof that this was, probably, the prevailing mode of interpretation in their age. Again, the psalm is quoted by Paul (Acts xiii. 32, 33) as applicable to Christ, and with reference to the fact that it was a doctrine of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to rise from the dead: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second

psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." And again, in Heb. i. 5, the same passage is quoted by Paul to establish the exalted rank of the Messiah as being above the angels: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" These quotations prove that in the estimation of the writers of the New Testament the psalm had an original reference to the Messiah; and the manner in which they make the quotation proves that this was the current belief of the Jews in their day, as they appear to have been under no apprehension that the propriety of the application which they made would be called in question.

(2) But, besides this, there is other evidence that such was the prevailing interpretation among the ancient Hebrews: "In the older Jewish writings, as the Sohar, the Talmud, &c., there is a variety of passages in which the Messianic interpretation is given to the psalm. See the collections by Raym. Martini, Pug. Fid. ed. Carpzov., in several places, and by Schöttgen, de Messia, pp. 227 seq. Even Kimchi and Jarchi confess that it was the prevailing interpretation among their forefathers; and the latter very honestly gives his reasons for departing from it, when he says he prefers to explain it of David, for the refutation of the heretics; that is, in order to destroy the force of the arguments drawn from it by the Christians." (Hengstenberg, Christ., i. 77.)

(3) That it refers to the Messiah is manifest from the psalm itself. This will be apparent from a few subordinate considerations. (*a*) It cannot be applied to David, or to any other earthly king; that is, there are expressions in it which cannot be applied with any degree of propriety to any earthly monarch whatever. This remark is founded particularly on the remarkable use of the word "*Son*" in the psalm, and the promise that "the uttermost parts of the earth" should be placed under the control of him to whom that word is applied. The word *son* is, indeed, of large signification, and is, in a certain sense, applied to the righteous in the plural number, as being the *sons* or the *children* of God by adoption; but it is not so applied in the singular number, and there is a peculiarity in its use here which shows that it was not intended to be applied to an earthly monarch, or to any pious man considered as a child of God. That appellation—*the* Son of God—properly denotes a nearer relation to God than can be applied to a mere mortal of any rank (comp. Notes on John v. 18), and was so understood by the Jews themselves. It is not used in the Old Testament, as applied to an earthly monarch, in the manner in which it is employed here. The remark here made is entirely irrespective of the doctrine which is sometimes supposed to be taught in this passage, of "the eternal generation" of the Son of God, since what is here said is equally true, whether that doctrine is well-founded or not. (*b*) There is an extent of dominion and a perpetuity of empire promised here which could not be applied to David or to any other earthly monarch, but which is entirely applicable to the Messiah (see vers. 8, 10). (*c*) Such, too, is the nature of the promise to those who put their trust in him, and the threatening on those who do not obey him (ver. 12). This is language which will be seen at once to be entirely applicable to the Messiah, but which cannot be so regarded in respect of any earthly monarch. (*d*) There is a strong probability that the psalm is designed to refer to the Messiah, from the fact that they who deny this have not been able to propose any other plausible interpretation, or to show with any degree of probability to whom it *does* refer. There were no Israelitish kings or princes to whom it could be regarded with any show of probability as applicable, unless it were David or Solomon; and yet there are no recorded circumstances in their lives to which it can be regarded as adapted, and there is no substantial agreement among those who maintain that it does refer to either of them. It is maintained by both Rosenmüller and De Wette that it cannot relate to David or Solomon. Some of the modern Jews maintain that it was composed by David respecting himself when the Philistines came up against him (2 Sam. v. 17); but this is manifestly an erroneous opinion, for not only was there nothing in the occurrence there to correspond with the language of the psalm, but there was at that time no particular consecration of the hill of Zion (ver. 6), nor was that mount regarded as holy or sacred until after the tabernacle was erected on it, which was after the Philistine war. The same remark may be made substantially of the supposition that it refers to the rebellion of Absalom, or to *any* of the circumstances in which David was placed.

PSALM II.

WHY [k] do the heathen [1] rage,

k Acts iv. 25, 26. 1 Or, *tumultuously assemble.*

And there is still less reason for supposing that it refers to Solomon, for there is no mention of any rebellion against him; of any general attempt to throw off his yoke; of any solemn consecration of him as king in consequence of, or in spite of such an attempt. (*e*) The psalm *agrees* with the account of the Messiah, or is in its general structure and details applicable to him. This will be shown in the exposition, and indeed is manifest on the face of it. The only plausible objection to this view is, as stated by De Wette, "According to the doctrine of Christianity, the Messiah is no conqueror of nations, bearing an iron sceptre; his kingdom is not of this world." But to this it may be replied, that all that is meant in ver. 9 may be, that he will set up a kingdom over the nations of the earth; that all his enemies will be subdued under him; and that the sceptre which he will sway will be firm and irresistible. See, for the applicability of this to the Messiah, the Notes on ver. 9.

(4) It may be added that the psalm is such as one might *expect* to find in the poetic writings of the Hebrews, with the views which they entertained of the Messiah. The promised Messiah was the object of deepest interest to their minds. All their hopes centered in him. To him they looked forward as the Great Deliverer; and all their anticipations of what the people of God were to be clustered around him. He was to be a Prince, a Conqueror, a Deliverer, a Saviour. To him the eyes of the nation were directed; he was shadowed forth by their pompous religious rites, and their sacred bards sang his advent. That we should find an entire psalm composed with reference to him, designed to set forth his character and the glory of his reign, is no more than what we should expect to find among a people where poetry is cultivated at all, and where these high hopes were cherished in reference to his advent; and especially if to this view of their national poetry, in itself considered, there be added the idea that the sacred bards wrote under the influence of inspiration, nothing is more natural than that we should expect to find a poetic composition having such a sole and exclusive reference. Nothing would have

and the people [2] imagine a vain thing?

l Ps. xlvi. 6. 2 *meditate.*

been more *unnatural* than that, with these prevailing views and hopes, and with the fact before us that so much of the Old Testament is sacred poetry, we should have found *no* such production as the second psalm, on the supposition that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah.

1. *Why do the heathen rage.* "Why do nations make a noise?" *Prof. Alexander.* The word *heathen* here—גּוֹיִם *goim*—means properly *nations*, without respect, so far as the *word* is concerned, to the *character* of the nations. It was applied by the Hebrews to the surrounding nations, or to all other people than their own; and as those nations were in fact heathens, or idolators, the word came to have this signification. Neh. v. 8; Jer. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxiii. 30; xxx. 11; compare אֲרָם, Jer. xxxii. 20. The word *Gentile* among the Hebrews (Gr., ἔθνος) expressed the same thing. Matt. iv. 15; vi. 32; x. 5, 18; xii. 21, *et sæpe.* The word rendered *rage*—רָגַשׁ—*ragash* — means to make a noise or tumult, and would be expressive of violent commotion or agitation. It occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures only in this place, though the corresponding Chaldee word—רְגַשׁ — *regash* — is found in Daniel vi. 6, 11, 15—rendered in ver. 6, "assembled together," in the margin "came tumultuously,"—and in ver. 11, 15, rendered *assembled.* The psalmist here sees the nations in violent agitation or commotion, as if under high excitement, engaged in accomplishing some purpose—rushing on to secure something, or to prevent something. The image of a mob, or of a tumultuous unregulated assemblage, would probably convey the idea of the psalmist. The word itself does not enable us to determine how *extensive* this agitation would be, but it is evidently implied that it would be a somewhat *general* movement; a move-

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take

ment in which more than one nation or people would participate. The matter in hand was something that affected the nations generally, and which would produce violent agitation among them. ¶ *And the people.* לְאֻמִּים *Leummim.* A word expressing substantially the same idea, that of *people*, or *nations*, and referring here to the same thing as the word rendered *heathen*—according to the laws of Hebrew parallelism in poetry. It is the *people* here that are seen in violent agitation: the conduct of the *rulers*, as associated with them, is referred to in the next verse. ¶ *Imagine.* Our word *imagine* does not precisely express the idea here. We mean by it, "to form a notion or idea in the mind; to fancy." *Webster.* The Hebrew word — הָגָה — *Hagah*, is the same which, in Ps. i. 2, is rendered *meditate*. See Notes on that verse. It means here that the mind is engaged in deliberating on it; that it plans, devises, or forms a purpose;—in other words, the persons referred to are *thinking* about some purpose which is here called a vain purpose; they are *meditating* some project which excites deep thought, but which cannot be effectual. ¶ *A vain thing.* That is, which will prove to be a vain thing, or a thing which they cannot accomplish. It cannot mean that they were engaged in forming plans which *they* supposed would be vain—for no persons would form such plans; but that they were engaged in designs which the *result* would show to be unsuccessful. The reference here is to the agitation among the nations in respect to the Divine purpose to set up the Messiah as king over the world, and to the opposition which this would create among the nations of the earth. See Notes on ver. 2. An ample fulfilment of this occurred in the opposition to him when he came in the flesh, and in the resistance everywhere made since his death to his reign upon the earth. Nothing has produced more agitation in the world (comp. Acts xvii. 6), and nothing still excites more determined resistance. The truths taught in this verse are (1) that sinners are opposed—even so much as to produce violent agitation of mind, and a fixed and determined purpose—to the plans and decrees of God, especially with respect to the reign of the Messiah; and (2) that their plans to resist this will be vain and ineffectual; wisely as their schemes may seem to be laid, and determined as they themselves are in regard to their execution, yet they *must* find them vain. What is implied here of the particular plans against the Messiah, is true of all the purposes of sinners, when they array themselves against the government of God.

2. *The kings of the earth.* This verse is designed to give a more specific form to the general statement in ver. 1. In the first verse the psalmist sees a general commotion among the nations as engaged in some plan that he sees must be a vain one; here he describes more particularly the cause of the excitement, and gives a nearer view of what is occurring. He now sees kings and rulers engaged in a specific and definite plot against Jehovah and against his Anointed. The word *kings* here is a general term, which would be applicable to all rulers,—as the kingly government was the only one then known, and the nations were under the control of absolute monarchs. A sufficient fulfilment would be found, however, if *any* rulers were engaged in doing what is here described. ¶ *Set themselves.* Or, take their stand. The latter expression would perhaps better convey the sense of the original. It is the idea of taking a stand, or of setting themselves in array, which is denoted by the expression;—they combine; they resolve; they are fixed in their purpose. Comp. Exod. ii. 4; xix. 17; xxxiv. 5. The attitude here is that of firm or determined resistance. ¶ *And the rulers.* A slight addition to the word *kings*. The sense is, that there was a *general* combination

counsel together, against the LORD, and against his [m] anointed,

[m] Ps. xlv. 7.

among all classes of rulers to accomplish what is here specified. It was not confined to any one class. ¶ *Take counsel together.* Consult together. Comp. Ps. xxxi. 13, "While they took counsel together against me." The word here used—יָסַד, *yasad*—means properly to found, to lay the foundation of, to establish; then, to be founded (Niph.); to support one's self; to lean upon—as, for example, to lean upon the elbow. Thus used, it is employed with reference to persons reclining or leaning upon a couch or cushion, especially as deliberating together, as the Orientals do in the *divan* or council. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxxiii. 3. The idea here is that of persons assembled to deliberate on an important matter. ¶ *Against the* LORD. Against *Jehovah*—the small capitals in our common version indicating that the original word is Jehovah. The meaning is, that they were engaged in deliberating *against* Jehovah in respect to the matter here referred to—to wit, his purpose to place the "Anointed One," his King (ver. 6), on the hill of Zion. It is not meant that they were in other respects arrayed against him, though it is true in fact that opposition to God in one respect may imply that there is an aversion to him in *all* respects, and that the same spirit which would lead men to oppose him in any one of his purposes would, if carried out, lead them to oppose him in all things. ¶ *And against his Anointed*—מְשִׁיחוֹ—*his Messiah:* hence our word *Messiah,* or *Christ.* The word means *Anointed,* and the allusion is to the custom of anointing kings and priests with holy oil when setting them apart to office, or consecrating them to their work. Comp. Notes on Matt. i. 1; Dan. ix. 26. The word *Messiah,* or *Anointed,* is therefore of so general a character in its signification that its mere use would not determine to whom it was to be applied—whether to a king, to a priest, or to the Messiah properly so called. The reference is to be determined by something in the connexion. All that the word here necessarily implies is, that there was some one whom Jehovah regarded as his *Anointed one,* whether king or priest, against whom the rulers of the earth had arrayed themselves. The subsequent part of the psalm (vers. 6, 7) enables us to ascertain that the reference here is to one who was *a King,* and that he sustained to Jehovah the relation of *a Son.* The New Testament, and the considerations suggested in the introduction to the psalm (§ 4), enable us to understand that the reference is to the Messiah properly so called—Jesus of Nazareth. This is expressly declared (Acts iv. 25–27) to have had its fulfilment in the purposes of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, in rejecting the Saviour and putting him to death. No one can doubt that all that is here stated in the psalm had a complete fulfilment in their combining to reject him and to put him to death; and we are, therefore, to regard the psalm as particularly referring to this transaction. Their conduct was, however, an illustration of the common feelings of rulers and people concerning him, and it was proper to represent the nations in general as in commotion in regard to him.

saying,

3 [n] Let us break their bands

[n] Luke xix. 14.

3. *Let us break their bands asunder.* The bands of Jehovah and of his Anointed. They who are engaged in this combination or conspiracy regard Jehovah and his Anointed as one, and as having one object—to set up a dominion over the world. Hence they take counsel against both; and, with the same purpose and design, endeavour to cast off the authority of each. The word *bands* here refers to the restraints imposed by their authority. The figure is probably taken from fastening a yoke on oxen, or the

asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

4 He that sitteth in the hea-

bands or cords which were used in ploughing—the bands of the yoke being significant of their subjection to the authority or will of another. The same figure is used by the Saviour in Matt. xi. 29: "Take my *yoke* upon you." The idea here is, that it was the purpose of Jehovah and his Anointed to establish a dominion over men, and that it was equally the purpose of the kings and rulers here referred to that it should *not* be done. ¶ *And cast away their cords from us.* The same idea under another form—the cords referring not to that which would bind them as prisoners, but to the ropes or thongs which bound oxen to the plough; and, hence, to that which would bind men to the service of God. The word translated *cords* is a stronger word than that which is rendered *bands*. It means properly what is twisted or interlaced, and refers to the usual manner in which ropes are made. Perhaps, also, in the words "let us cast away" there is the expression of an idea that it could be easily done: that they had only to *will* it, and it would be done. Together, the expressions refer to the purpose among men to cast off the government of God, and especially that part of his administration which refers to his purpose to establish a kingdom under the Messiah. It thus indicates a prevalent state of the human mind as being impatient of the restraints and authority of God, and especially of the dominion of his Son, anointed as King.

The passage (vers. 1—3) proves—(1) that the government of Jehovah, the true God, and the Messiah or Christ, is the same; (2) that opposition to the Messiah, or to Christ, is in fact opposition to the purposes of the true God; (3) that it may be expected that men will oppose that government, and there will be agitation and commotion in endeavouring to throw it off. The passage, considered as referring to the Messiah, had an ample fulfilment (*a*) in the purposes of the high priests, of Herod, and of Pilate, to put him to death, and in the general rejection of him by his own countrymen; (*b*) in the general conduct of mankind—in their impatience of the restraints of the law of God, and especially of that law as promulgated by the Saviour, demanding submission and obedience to him; and (*c*) in the conduct of individual sinners—in the opposition of the human heart to the authority of the Lord Jesus. The passage before us is just as applicable to the world now as it was to the time when the Saviour personally appeared on the earth.

4. *He that sitteth in the heavens.* God, represented as having his home, his seat, his throne in heaven, and thence administering the affairs of the world. This verse commences the second strophe or stanza of the psalm; and this strophe (vers. 4—6) corresponds with the first (vers. 1—3) in its structure. The former describes the feelings and purposes of those who would cast off the government of God; this describes the feelings and purposes of God in the same order, for in each case the psalmist describes what is *done*, and then what is *said*: the nations rage tumultuously (vers. 1, 2), and then say (ver. 3), "Let us break their bands." God sits calmly in the heavens, smiling on their vain attempts (ver. 4), and then solemnly declares (vers. 5, 6) that, in spite of all their opposition, he "has set his King upon his holy hill of Zion." There is much sublimity in this description. While men rage and are tumultuous in opposing his plans, he sits calm and undisturbed in his own heaven. Compare the Notes on the similar place in Isa. xviii. 4. ¶ *Shall laugh.* Will smile at their vain attempts; will not be disturbed or agitated by their efforts; will go calmly on in the execution of his purposes. Comp. as above Isa. xviii. 4. See also Prov. i. 26; Ps. xxxvii. 13; lix. 8. This is,

vens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in [o] derision.

o Prov. i. 26. [1] Or, *trouble.*

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and [1] vex them in his sore displeasure.

of course, to be regarded as spoken after the manner of men, and it means that God will go steadily forward in the accomplishment of his purposes. There is included also the idea that he will look with *contempt* on their vain and futile efforts. ¶ *The* LORD *shall have them in derision.* The same idea is expressed here in a varied form, as is the custom in parallelism in Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew word לָעַג, *laag*, means properly to stammer; then to speak in a barbarous or foreign tongue; then to mock or deride, by imitating the stammering voice of any one. Gesenius, *Lex.* Here it is spoken of God, and, of course, is not to be understood literally, any more than when eyes, and hands, and feet are spoken of as appertaining to him. The meaning is, that there is a result in the case, in the Divine mind, *as if* he mocked or derided the vain attempts of men; that is, he goes calmly forward in the execution of his own purposes, and he looks upon and regards their efforts as vain, as *we* do the efforts of others when we mock or deride them. The *truth* taught in this verse is, that God will carry forward his own plans in spite of all the attempts of men to thwart them. This general truth may be stated in two forms: (1) He sits undisturbed and unmoved in heaven while men rage against him, and while they combine to cast off his authority. (2) He carries forward his own plans in spite of them. This he does (*a*) *directly*, accomplishing his schemes without regard to their attempts; and (*b*) by making their purposes tributary to his own, so making them the instruments in carrying out his own plans. Comp. Acts iv. 28.

5. *Then shall he speak unto them.* That is, this seeming indifference and unconcern will not last for ever. He will not always look calmly on, nor will he suffer them to accomplish their purposes without interposing. When he has shown how he regards their schemes—how impotent they are—how much they are really the objects of derision, considered as an attempt to cast off his authority—he will interpose and declare his own purposes—his determination to establish his king on the hill of Zion. This is implied in the word "*then.*" ¶ *In his wrath.* In anger. His contempt for their plans will be followed by indignation against themselves for forming such plans, and for their efforts to execute them. One of these things is not inconsistent with the other; for the purpose of the rebels may be very weak and futile, and yet their wickedness in forming the plan may be very great. The weakness of the scheme, and the fact that it will be vain, does not change the character of him who has made it; the fact that he is *foolish* does not prove that he is not *wicked.* God will treat the scheme and those who form it as they deserve—the one with contempt, the other with his wrath. The word *wrath* here, it is hardly necessary to say, should be interpreted in the same manner as the word "*laugh*" in ver. 4, not as denoting a feeling precisely like that which exists in the human mind, subject as man is to unreasonable *passion*, but as it is proper to apply it to God—the strong conviction (without passion or personal feeling) of the evil of sin, and the expression of his purpose in a manner adapted to *show* that evil, and to *restrain* others from its commission. It means that he will speak to them *as if* he were angry; or that his treatment of them will be such as men experience from others when they are angry. ¶ *And vex them.* The word here rendered *vex*—בָּהַל, *Bahal*—means in the original or *Kal* form, *to tremble;* and then, in the form here used, the *Piel*, to cause to tremble, to terrify, to strike with consternation. This might be done either by a threat

6 Yet have I [1]set my king [p] upon [2] my holy hill of Zion.

[1] *anointed.* [p] Acts v. 31.

[2] *Zion, the hill of my holiness.*

or by some judgment indicative of displeasure or anger. Ps. lxxxiii. 15; Dan. xi. 44; Job xxii. 10. The idea here is that he would alarm them, or make them quake with fear, by what is specified of his purpose; to wit, by his determination to set his King on his holy hill, and by placing the sceptre of the earth in his hands. *Their* designs, therefore, would be frustrated, and if they did not submit to him they must perish (see vers. 9—12). ¶ *In his sore displeasure.* Literally, in his *heat* or *burning*, that is, in his anger; as we speak of one that is *inflamed* with anger, or that *burns* with indignation; or, as we speak of the passions, *kindling into a flame.* The meaning here is, that God would be displeased with their purposes, and that the expression of his design would be adapted to fill them with the deepest alarm. Of course, all such words are to be interpreted in accordance with what we know to be the nature of God, and not in accordance with the same passions in men. God is opposed to sin, and will express his opposition *as if* he felt angry, but it will be in the most calm manner, and not as the result of passion. It will be simply because it *ought* to be so.

6. *Yet have I set my king.* The word *yet* is merely the translation of the conjunction *and.* It is rendered in the Vulgate *but—autem;* and so in the LXX., δὲ. It would be better rendered perhaps by the usual word *and:* "And I have set or constituted my king," &c. This is properly to be regarded as the expression of God himself; as what he *says* in reply to their declared purposes (ver. 3), and as what is referred to in ver. 5. The meaning is, he would speak to them in his anger, and say, "In spite of all your purposes and all your opposition, I have set my king on the hill of Zion." That is, they had *their* plans and God had *his; they* meant to cast off his authority, and to prevent his purpose to set up the Messiah as king; *he* resolved, on the contrary, to carry out his purposes, AND he would do it. The word rendered *set*—נָסַךְ, *nasach*—means, literally, to pour, to pour out, as in making a libation to the Deity, Ex. xxx. 9; Hos. ix. 4; Isa. xxx. 1; then, to pour out oil in anointing a king or priest, and hence to consecrate, to inaugurate, &c. See Josh. xiii. 21; Ps. lxxxiii. 11; Mic. v. 5. The idea here is, that he had solemnly inaugurated or constituted the Messiah as king; that is, that he had formed the purpose to do it, and he therefore speaks *as if* it were already done. The words *my King* refer, of course, to the anointed One, the Messiah, ver. 2. It is not simply *a* king, or *the* king, but "*my* king," meaning that he derived his appointment from God, and that he was placed there to execute *his* purposes. This indicates the very near relation which the anointed One sustains to him who had appointed him, and prepares us for what is said in the subsequent verse, where he is called his *Son.* ¶ *Upon my holy hill of Zion.* Zion was the southern hill in the city of Jerusalem. See Notes on Isa. i. 8. It was the highest of the hills on which the city was built. It was made by David the capital of his kingdom, and was hence called *the city of* David, 2 Chron. v. 2. By the poets and prophets it is often put for Jerusalem itself, Isa. ii. 3; viii. 18; x. 24; xxxiii. 14, *et al.* It did not obtain this distinction until it was taken by David from the Jebusites, 2 Sam. v. 5—9; 1 Chron. xi. 4—8. To that place David removed the ark of the covenant, and there he built an altar to the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, 2 Sam. xxiv. 15—25. Zion became thenceforward the metropolis of the kingdom, and the name was transferred to the entire city. It is to this that the passage here refers; and the meaning is, that in that metropolis or capital God had constituted his Messiah king,

7 I will declare [1]the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou [q] *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

[1] Or, *for a.*

[q] Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; Acts xiii. 33.

or had appointed him to reign over his people. This cannot refer to David himself, for in no proper sense was he *constituted* or *inaugurated* king in Jerusalem; that is, there was no such ceremony of inauguration as is referred to here. Zion was called the "*holy* hill," or "the hill of my holiness" (Heb.), because it was set apart as the seat of the Theocracy, or the residence of God, from the time that David removed the ark there. That became the place where God reigned, and where his worship was celebrated. This must refer to the Messiah, and to the fact that God had set him apart to reign over his people, and thence over all the earth. The truth taught in this passage is, that God will carry forward his own purposes in spite of all the opposition which men can make, and that it is his deliberate design to make his anointed One—the Messiah—King over all.

7. *I will declare the decree.* We have here another change in the speaker. The Anointed One is himself introduced as declaring the great purpose which was formed in regard to him, and referring to the promise which was made to him, as the foundation of the purpose of Jehovah (ver. 6) to set him on the hill of Zion. The first strophe or stanza (vers. 1–3) is closed with a statement made by the rebels of *their* intention or design; the second (vers. 4–6) with a statement of the purpose of Jehovah; the third is introduced by this declaration of the Messiah himself. The change of the persons speaking gives a dramatic interest to the whole psalm. There can be no doubt that the word "*I*" here refers to the Messiah. The word *decree* — חֹק *hhohk*—means properly something decreed, prescribed, appointed. See Job xxiii. 14. Comp. Gen. xlvii. 26; Exod. xii. 24. Thus it is equivalent to law, statute, ordinance. Here it refers not to a law which he was to obey, but to an ordinance or statute respecting his reign: the solemn purpose of Jehovah in regard to the kingdom which the Messiah was to set up; the *constitution* of his kingdom. This, as the explanation shows, implied two things—(*a*) that he was to be regarded and acknowledged as his *Son*, or to have that rank and dignity (ver. 7); and (*b*) that the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth were to be given him for a possession, or that his reign was to extend over all the world (ver. 8). The word "*declare*" here means that he would give utterance to, or that he would now himself make a statement in explanation of the reason why Jehovah had determined to establish him as King on his holy hill of Zion. There is great beauty in thus introducing the Messiah himself as making this declaration, presenting it now in the form of a solemn covenant or pledge. The determination of Jehovah (ver. 6) to establish him as King on his holy hill is thus seen not to be arbitrary, but to be in fulfilment of a solemn promise made long before, and is therefore an illustration of his covenant faithfulness and truth. ¶ *The* LORD *hath said unto me.* Jehovah hath said. See vers. 2, 4. He does not intimate *when* it was that he had said this, but the fair interpretation is, that it was *before* the purpose was to be carried into execution to place him as King in Zion; that is, as applicable to the Messiah, before he became incarnate or was manifested to execute his purpose on earth. It is implied, therefore, that it was in some previous state, and that he had come forth in virtue of the pledge that he would be recognised as the Son of God. The passage cannot be understood as referring to Christ without admitting his existence previous to the incarnation, for all that follows is manifestly the result of the exalted rank which God purposed to

give him *as his Son*, or as the result of the promise made to him then. ¶ *Thou* art *my Son*. That is, Jehovah had declared him to be his Son; he had conferred on him the rank and dignity fairly involved in the title THE SON OF GOD. In regard to the general meaning of this, and what is implied in it, see notes on Matt. i. 1; Heb. i. 2, 5; Rom. i. 4; and John v. 18. The phrase "*sons* of God" is elsewhere used frequently to denote the saints, the children of God, or men eminent for rank and power (comp. Gen. vi. 2, 4; Job i. 6; Hos. i. 10; John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14, 19; Phil. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 1); and once to denote angels (Job xxxviii. 7); but the appellation "THE *Son of God*" is not appropriated in the Scriptures to any one but the Messiah. It does not occur before this in the Old Testament, and it occurs but once after this, Dan. iii. 25. See Notes on that passage. This makes its use in the case before us the more remarkable, and justifies the reasoning of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (i. 5) as to its meaning. The true sense, therefore, according to the Hebrew usage, and according to the proper meaning of the term, is, that he sustained a relation to God which could be compared only with that which a son among men sustains to his father; and that the term, as thus used, fairly implies an equality in nature with God himself. It is such a term as would not be applied to a mere man; it is such as is not applied to the angels (Heb. i. 5); and therefore it must imply a nature superior to either. ¶ *This day*. On the application of this in the New Testament, see Notes on Acts xiii. 33 and Heb. i. 5. The whole passage has been often appealed to in support of the doctrine of the "eternal generation" of Christ, meaning that he was "begotten" from eternity; that is, that his Divine nature was in some sense an emanation from the Father, and that this is from eternity. Whatever may be thought of that doctrine, however, either as to its intelligibility or its truth, there is nothing in the use of the phrase "this day," or in the application of the passage in the New Testament (Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5), to sustain it. The language, indeed, in the connexion in which it is found, does, as remarked above, demonstrate that he had a pre-existence, since it is addressed to him *as the result* of a decree or covenant made with him by Jehovah, and *as the foundation* of the purpose to set him as King on the hill of Zion. The words "this day" would naturally refer to that time when this "decree" was made, or this covenant formed; and as that was before the creation of the world, it must imply that he had an existence then. The time referred to by the meaning of the word is, *that* when it was determined to crown him as the Messiah. This is founded *on* the relation subsisting between him and Jehovah, and implied when in that relation he is called his "Son;" but it determines nothing as to the time *when* this relation commenced. Jehovah, in the passage, is regarded as declaring his purpose to make him King in Zion, and the language is that of a solemn consecration to the kingly office. He is speaking of this as a purpose before he came into the world; it was executed, or carried into effect, by his resurrection from the dead, and by the exaltation consequent on that. Comp. Acts xiii. 33 and Eph. i. 20—22. Considered, then, *as a promise* or *purpose*, this refers to the period before the incarnation; considered as pertaining *to the execution of that purpose*, it refers to the time when he was raised from the dead and exalted over all things as King in Zion. In neither case can the words "this day" be construed as meaning the same as *eternity*, or *from eternity;* and therefore they can determine nothing respecting the doctrine of "eternal generation." ¶ *Have I begotten thee.* That is, in the matter referred to, so that it would be proper to apply to him the phrase "my *Son*," and to constitute him "King" in Zion. The meaning is, that he had

so constituted the relationship of Father and Son *in the case*, that it was proper that the appellation *Son* should be given him, and that he should be regarded and addressed as such. So Prof. Alexander: "The essential meaning of the phrase *I have begotten thee* is simply this, *I am thy Father.*" This is, of course, to be understood in accordance with the nature of God, and we are not to bring to the interpretation the ideas which enter into that human relationship. It means that in some proper sense—some sense appropriate to the Deity—such a relation was constituted as would justify this reference to the most tender and important of all human relationships. In what sense that is, is a fair subject of inquiry, but it is not proper to assume that it is in anything like a *literal* sense, or that there can be no *other* sense of the passage than that which is implied in the above-named doctrine; for it *cannot* be literal, and there *are* other ideas that may be conveyed by the phrase than that of "eternal generation." The word rendered "*begotten*" (יָלַד — *Yalad*) determines nothing certainly as to the *mode* in which this relationship was formed. It means properly—(1) to bear, to bring forth as a mother, Gen. iv. 1; (2) to beget, as a father, Gen. iv. 18; and then (3) as applied to God it is used in the sense of creating—or of so creating or forming as that the result would be that a relation would exist which might be compared with that of a father and a son. Deut. xxxii. 18: "Of the Rock that *begat* thee thou art unmindful." Comp. Jer. ii. 27: "Saying to a block [idol], Thou art my father, thou hast *begotten* me." So Paul says, 1 Cor. iv. 15: "In Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you through the Gospel." The full meaning, therefore, of this word would be met if it be supposed that Jehovah had given the Messiah this place and rank in such a sense that it was proper to speak of himself as *the Father* and the Anointed One as *the Son*. And was there not enough in designating him to this high office; in sending him into the world; in raising him from the dead; in placing him at his own right hand—appointing him as King and Lord—to justify this language? Is not this the very thing under consideration? Is it proper, then, in connexion with this passage, to start the question about his eternal generation? Comp. Notes on Rom. i. 4. On this passage Calvin says (*in loc.*), "I know that this passage is explained by many as referring to the eternal generation of Christ, who maintain that in the adverb *to-day* there is, as it were, a perpetual act beyond the limits of time, denoted. But the Apostle Paul is a more faithful and competent interpreter of this prophecy, who in Acts xiii. 33 recalls us to that which I have called a glorious demonstration of Christ. He was said to be begotten, therefore, not that he might be the Son of God, by which he might begin to be such, but that he might be manifested to the world as such. Finally, this begetting ought to be understood not of the mutual relation of the Father and the Son, but it signifies merely that he who was from the beginning hidden in the bosom of the Father, and who was obscurely shadowed forth under the law, from the time when he was manifested with clear intimation of his rank, was acknowledged as the Son of God, as it is said in John i. 14." So Prof. Alexander, though supposing that this is founded on an eternal relation between the Father and the Son, says, "*This day have I begotten thee* may be considered as referring only to the coronation of Messiah, which is an ideal one," vol. i., p. 15. The result of the exposition of this passage may therefore be thus stated: (*a*) The term *Son*, as here used, is a *peculiar* appellation of the Messiah—a term applicable to him in a sense in which it can be given to no other being. (*b*) As here used, and as elsewhere used, it *supposes* his existence before the incarnation. (*c*) Its use here, and the purpose formed, imply that he had an existence *before*

8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

this purpose was formed, so that he could be personally addressed, and so that a promise could be made to him. (*d*) The term *Son* is not here used in *reference* to that anterior relation, and determines nothing as to the mode of his previous being—whether from eternity essentially in the nature of God; or whether in some mysterious sense begotten; or whether as an emanation of the Deity; or whether created. (*e*) The term, as Calvin suggests, and as maintained by Prof. Alexander, refers here *only* to his being constituted King—to the act of coronation — whenever that occurred. (*f*) This, *in fact*, occurred when he was raised from the dead, and when he was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven (Acts xiii. 33), so that the application of the passage by Paul in the Acts accords with the result to which we are led by the fair interpretation of the passage. (*g*) The passage, therefore, determines nothing, one way or the other, respecting the doctrine of eternal generation, and cannot, therefore, be used in proof of that doctrine.

8. *Ask of me.* That is, of God. This is a part of the "decree" or purpose, as mentioned in ver. 7. That decree embraced not only the design to constitute him as his Son, in the sense that he was to be king in Zion, but also the purpose to give him a dominion embracing "the heathen" and "the uttermost parts of the earth." This wide dominion was to be given him on condition that he would "ask" for it, thus keeping up the idea that Jehovah, as such, is the great source of authority and empire, and that the Messiah, as such, occupies a rank subordinate to him. This relation of the Father and Son is everywhere recognised in the New Testament. As we may be sure that the Messiah *will* ask for this, it follows that the world *will* yet be brought under his sceptre. It may be added that as this wide dominion is promised to the Messiah only on condition that he "asks" for it or prays for it, much more is it true that *we* can hope for this and for no favour from God, unless we seek it by earnest prayer. ¶ *And I shall give* thee. I will give thee. That is, he would ultimately give him this possession. No *time* is specified when it would be done, and the prophecy will be fulfilled if it shall be accomplished in *any* period of the history of the world. ¶ *The heathen.* The *nations* (Notes, ver. 1); that is, the world. In the time of the writer of the psalm, the world would be spoken of as divided into Hebrews and other nations; the people of God and foreigners. The same division is often referred to in the New Testament under the terms Jew and Gentile, as the Greeks divided all the world into Greeks and barbarians. The word would now embrace all the nations which are not under the influence of the true religion. ¶ For *thine inheritance.* Thy heritage; thy portion as my Son. There is an allusion here to the fact that he had constituted him as his Son, and hence it was proper to speak of him as the heir of all things. See Notes on Heb. i. 4. ¶ *And the uttermost parts of the earth.* The farthest regions of the world. This promise would properly embrace all the world as then known, as it is now known, as it shall be hereafter known. ¶ For *thy possession.* That is, as king. This, on the earth, was be to his possession as the Son of Jehovah, constituted as king. It may be remarked here, (*a*) that this can have its fulfilment only in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not true of David nor of any other Hebrew monarch that he had conceded to him, in fact, any such possession. Their dominions extended, at any time, but little beyond the bounds of Palestine, and embraced a very limited part of the earth—but a small territory, even as compared with many then existing kingdoms. The phrase here used could

9 Thou shalt break them with [r]a rod of iron; thou shalt dash

r Rev. i 27.

never have been applied to the limited and narrow country of Palestine. (*b*) The promise is to be understood as still in full force. It has never been cancelled or recalled, and though its fulfilment has *seemed* to be long delayed, yet as no *time* was specified, its spirit and meaning have not been disregarded. Events have shown that it was not *intended* that it should be speedily accomplished; and events, when no time is specified, should be allowed to be interpreters of the original meaning of the prophecy. (*c*) The promise will yet be fulfilled. It is evidently supposed in the promise that the Messiah *would* ask for this; and it is solemnly affirmed that if he *did*, this wide inheritance would be granted to him. The world, then, is to be regarded as given by covenant to the Son of God, and in due time he will set up his dominion over the earth, and rule over mankind. The period is coming when the actual sceptre swayed over the nations of the earth will be that of the Son of God, and when his right to give laws and to reign will be acknowledged from the rising to the setting sun. This is the only thing in the future that is certainly known to us, and this is enough to make everything in that future bright.

9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.* That is, evidently, thine enemies; for it cannot be supposed to be meant that he would sway such a sceptre over his own people. The idea is that he would crush and subdue all his foes. He would have absolute power, and the grant which had been made to him would be accompanied with authority sufficient to hold it. That dominion which was to be conceded to him would be not only one of protection to his friends, but also of punishment on his enemies; and the statement here is made prominent because the former part of the psalm had respect to rebels, and the Messiah is here represented as being invested with power sufficient to punish and restrain them. The Vulgate renders this "thou shalt rule;" the Septuagint, "thou shalt feed"—ποιμανεῖς; that is, thou shalt feed them as a shepherd does his flock; thou shalt exercise over them the care and protection of a shepherd. This rendering occurs by a slight change in the *pointing* of the Hebrew word, though the most approved mode of pointing the word is that which is followed in our common translation. De Wette, Hengstenberg, Alexander, Horsley, adopt the common reading. What is said in this verse has been urged as an objection to referring it to the Messiah. The remark of De Wette on this matter has been quoted in the introduction to this psalm, § 4 (3). But it may be observed, while it is everywhere represented that the sceptre of the Messiah over the earth will be a mild sceptre, it is also everywhere stated that he will ultimately crush and overthrow all his foes. Thus in Isa. xi. 4: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." So Ps. cx. 6: "He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies." So, likewise, Rev. xix. 15: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." So also in Matt. xxv., and elsewhere, it is said that he will come to judgment, and will consign all his foes to appropriate punishment. While it is said that the reign of the Messiah would be a mild reign, and that his kingdom would not be of this world, and while he is represented as the Prince of peace, it is also said that he would be invested with all the authority of a sovereign. While he would have power to protect his friends, he would also have power to humble and

them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

crush his foes. The expression *with a rod of iron* refers to the sceptre which he would bear. A sceptre was sometimes made of wood, sometimes of gold, sometimes of ivory, and sometimes of iron. The idea, when the ast was the case, was, that the dominion was absolute, and that there was nothing that could resist it. Perhaps the idea of justice or severity would be that which would be most naturally suggested by this. As applicable to the Messiah, it can only mean that his enemies would be crushed and subdued before him. ¶ *Thou shalt dash them in pieces.* The same idea is here expressed in another form, but indicating more particularly the ease with which it would be done. The word rendered "dash them in pieces" means to break in pieces as an earthen vessel, Judges vii. 20; Jer. xxii. 28. It is used to denote the crushing of infants on stones, Ps. cxxxvii. 9. The word *shiver* would well express the idea here—"thou shalt *shiver* them." ¶ *Like a potter's vessel.* A vessel or instrument made by a potter; a vessel made of clay. This is easily broken, and especially with a rod of iron, and the idea here is that he would crush and subdue his enemies as *easily* as this could be done. No image could more happily express the ease with which he would subdue his foes; and this accords with all the representations of the New Testament—that with infinite ease—with a *word*—Christ can subdue his enemies, and consign them to ruin. Comp. Matt. xxv. 41, 46; Luke xix. 27. The sense here is, simply, that the Messiah would be absolute; that he would have power to quell all rebellion against God, and to punish all those that rise up against him; and that on those who are incorrigibly rebellious he would exercise that power, and take effectual means to subdue them. This is merely what is done by all just governments, and is by no means inconsistent with the idea that such a government would be mild and gentle towards those who are obedient. The protection of the righteous makes the punishment of the wicked necessary in all governments, and the one cannot be secured without the other. This verse is applied to the Messiah in the Book of Revelation, ch. ii. 27; xix. 15; comp. xii. 5. See Notes on these passages.

10. *Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings.* This is to be understood as the language of the psalmist. See introduction to the psalm, § 3. It is an exhortation addressed to the rulers and princes whom the psalmist saw engaged in opposition to the purpose of Jehovah (vers. 1—3)—and hence to all rulers and princes—to act the part of wisdom, by not attempting to resist the plans of God, but to submit to him, and secure his friendship. The psalmist cautions them to take warning, in view of what must certainly come upon the enemies of the Messiah; to cease their vain attempts to oppose his reign, and, by a timely submission to him, to ensure his friendship, and to escape the doom that must come upon his foes. The way of wisdom, then, was not to engage in an attempt in which they must certainly be crushed, but to secure at once the friendship of one appointed by God to reign over the earth. ¶ *Be instructed.* In your duty to Jehovah and his Anointed One; that is, in the duty of submitting to this arrangement, and lending your influence to promote it. The word here used, and rendered *be instructed*, means properly to chastise, chasten, correct; and it here means, be admonished, exhorted, or warned. Comp. Prov. ix. 7; Job iv. 3; Ps. xvi. 7. ¶ *Ye judges of the earth.* Ye who administer justice; that is, ye rulers. This was formerly done by kings themselves, as it is now *supposed* to be in monarchical

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
[s] and rejoice with trembling.
12 [t] Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled

s Heb. xii. 28. *t* John v. 23.

governments, where the judges act in the name of the king. In Republics, justice is supposed to be administered by the people through those whom *they* have appointed to execute it. The word here is equivalent to rulers, and the call is on those who occupy posts of office and honour not to oppose the purposes of Jehovah, but to bring their influence to the promotion of his designs. At the same time, it cannot be doubted that it is implied that they should seek to be interested personally in his reign.

11. *Serve the* LORD *with fear.* With reverence, and with deep apprehensions of the *consequences* of *not* serving and obeying him. That is, serve him in not opposing, but in promoting his purpose of establishing a kingdom under the Messiah, with the deep apprehension that if you do not do it, he will arise and crush you in his wrath. ¶ *And rejoice.* Prof. Alexander renders this *shout*, and supposes that it refers to the customary recognition of a present sovereign. The word used—גִּילוּ, *gil*—means properly to move in a circle, to revolve; and then to dance in a circle, to exult, to rejoice. Then, according to Gesenius, it means to tremble, to fear, from the leaping or palpitation of the heart (Job xxxvii. 1; Hos. x. 5; Ps. xxix. 6). Gesenius renders it here "fear with trembling." The common translation, however, better expresses the sense. It means that they should welcome the purposes of Jehovah, and exult in his reign, but that it should be done with a suitable apprehension of his majesty and power, and with the reverence which becomes the public acknowledgment of God. ¶ *With trembling.* With reverence and awe, feeling that he has almighty power, and that the consequences of being found opposed to him must be overwhelming and awful. The *duty* here enjoined on kings and rulers is that of welcoming the purposes of God, and of bringing their influence—derived from the station which they occupy—to bear in promoting the reign of truth upon the earth—a duty binding on kings and princes as well as on other men. The *feelings* with which this is to be done are those which belong to transactions in which the honour and the reign of God are concerned. They are *mingled* feelings, derived from the mercy of God on the one hand, and from his wrath on the other; from the *hope* which his promise and purpose inspires, and from the *apprehension* derived from his warnings and threatenings.

12. *Kiss the Son.* Him whom God hath declared to be his Son (ver. 7), and whom, as such, he has resolved to set as King on his holy hill (ver. 6). The word *kiss* here is used in accordance with Oriental usages, for it was in this way that respect was indicated for one of superior rank. This was the ancient mode of doing homage or allegiance to a king, 1 Sam. x. 1. It was also the mode of rendering homage to an idol, 1 Kings xix. 18; Hos. xiii. 2; Job xxxi. 27. The *mode* of rendering homage to a king by a kiss was sometimes to kiss his hand, or his dress, or his feet, as among the Persians. *De Wette.* The practice of kissing the hand of a monarch is not uncommon in European courts as a token of allegiance. The meaning here is that they should express their allegiance to the Son of God, or recognise him as the authorized King, with suitable expressions of submission and allegiance; that they should receive him as King, and submit to his reign. Applied to others, it means that they should embrace him as their Saviour. ¶ *Lest he be angry.* If you do not acknowledge his claims, and receive him as the Messiah. ¶ *And ye perish* from *the way.* The word *from* in this place is supplied by the translators. It is literally, "And ye perish the way." See Notes on

but a little. Blessed [u] *are* all they that put their trust in him.

[u] Psa. lxxxiv. 12.

Ps. i. 6. The meaning here seems to be either "lest ye are lost in respect to the way," that is, the way to happiness and salvation; or "lest ye fail to find the way" to life; or "lest ye perish *by* the way," to wit, before you reach your destination, and accomplish the object you have in view. The design seems to be to represent them as pursuing a certain journey or path—as life is often represented (comp. Ps. i. 1)—and as being cut down before they reached the end of their journey. ¶ *When his wrath is kindled.* When his wrath *burns.* Applying to anger or wrath a term which is common now, as when we speak of one whose anger is *heated,* or who is *hot* with wrath. ¶ *But a little.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "For his wrath will *soon* burn." This, it seems to me, is in accordance with the original; the word "little" probably referring to *time,* and not to the intensity of his anger. This accords better also with the connection, for the design is not to state that there will be *degrees* in the manifestation of his anger, but that his anger would not long be delayed. In due time he would execute judgment on his enemies; and whenever his anger began to burn, his enemies must perish. ¶ *Blessed* are *all they that put their trust in him.* Kings, princes, people; —*all,* of every age and every land; the poor, the rich, the bond, the free; white, black, copper-coloured, or mixed; *all* in sickness or health, in prosperity or adversity, in life or in death; *all,* of every condition, and in all conceivable circumstances,—are blessed who put their trust in him. All need him as a Saviour; all will find him to be a Saviour adapted to their wants. All who do this are happy (comp. Notes on Ps. i. 1); all are safe in time and in eternity. This great truth is stated everywhere in the Bible; and to induce the children of men—weak, and guilty, and helpless—to put their trust in the Son of God, is the great design of all the communications which God has made to mankind.

PSALM III.

§ 1. *The author.*—This psalm purports in the *title* to be "A Psalm of David," and is the *first* one to which a title indicating authorship, or the occasion on which a psalm was composed, is prefixed. The title is found in the Chaldee Paraphrase, the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic versions. It is not, indeed, certain by whom the title was prefixed, but there is no reason to doubt its correctness. The sentiments in the psalm accord with the circumstances in which David was more than once placed, and are such as we may suppose he would *express* in those circumstances.

§ 2. *The occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—The psalm, according to the title, purports to have been written by David, "when he fled from Absalom his son." That is, it was composed at the time when he fled from Absalom—or in view of that event, and as expressive of his feelings on that occasion, though it might have been penned afterwards. Neither of these suppositions has any intrinsic improbability in it; for though at the time when he fled there was, of course, much tumult, agitation, and anxiety, yet there is no improbability in supposing that these thoughts passed through his mind, and that while these events were going forward, during some moments taken for rest, or in the night-watches, he may have given vent to these deep feelings in this poetic form. Kimchi says that it was the opinion of the ancient Rabbins that the psalm was actually composed when David with naked feet, and with his head covered, ascended the Mount of Olives, as he fled from Jerusalem, 2 Sam. xv. 30. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that in these circumstances he would actually give himself to the task of a poetic composition; yet nothing is more probable than that such thoughts passed through his mind, and nothing would be more natural than that he should seize the first moment of peace and calmness—when the agitation of the scene should

be in some measure over—to embody these thoughts in verse. Indeed, there is evidence in the psalm itself that it was actually penned on some such occasion. There is (vers. 1, 2) an allusion to the great number of his foes, and to those who had risen up against him, and an expression of his agitation and anxiety in view of that; and there is then a statement that he had, in these circumstances, cried unto the Lord, and that God had heard him out of his holy hill, and that, notwithstanding these alarms, he had been permitted to lie down and sleep, for the Lord had sustained him (vers. 4, 5). In these circumstances—after preservation and peace during what he had apprehended would be a dreadful night—what was more proper, or more natural, than the composition of such a psalm as the one before us?

If the psalm was composed by David, it *was* most probably at the time supposed in the title—the time when he fled from Absalom his son. There is no other period of his life to which it could be regarded as fitted, unless it were the time of Saul, and the persecutions which *he* waged against him. Hitzig indeed supposes that the latter was the occasion on which it was written; but to this it may be replied—(*a*) That there is no direct evidence of this. (*b*) That the title should be regarded as good evidence, unless it can be set aside by some clear proofs. (*c*) That the contents of the psalm are no more applicable to the time of Saul than to the time of Absalom. (*d*) That in the time of the persecutions of Saul, David had not been in such circumstances as are implied in ver. 4, "he heard me *out of his holy hill.*" This, according to the fair construction of the language, must be understood as referring to Mount Zion (comp. Notes, Ps. ii. 6), and implies that David at the time referred to was the established king, and had made that the seat of his authority. This had not occurred in the time of Saul; and there can be no reason for supposing, as Hitzig does, that Mount Horeb is intended.

The flight of David, which is supposed to be referred to here, is described in 2 Sam. xv—xviii. Absalom rebelled against his father; gathered together a great number of the disaffected in the kingdom; and under pretence of performing a vow which he had made, obtained permission to go to Hebron, having given instructions to his followers to meet him, and having made arrangements to be proclaimed king there. So artful had he been, so numerous were his followers, so extensive seemed to be the defection, and so little prepared was David to meet it, that the only prospect of safety seemed to be in flight. With a few attendants David left Jerusalem, and passed over the Mount of Olives, designing to seek a place of refuge. This was to him *the great trial* of his life; for there *is* no greater trial than the ingratitude of a son when he seeks the life of his father. All the circumstances of this case are such that we should suppose that David *would* cry to God in some such language as is found in this psalm.

It is indeed objected by Horsley that there is "nothing in the psalm that had any particular reference to this event," and hence he supposes that the title should be, "Prayer of a Believer for Deliverance from the Atheistical Conspiracy." But there is nothing in the original title that corresponds with this; and there is no need for departing from the common supposition. It is true that there is in the psalm no *express* mention of Absalom; but the same remark may be made of nearly all the psalms. A considerable portion of David's psalms were doubtless composed in view of the circumstances in which the writer was placed, and were designed to be expressive of his own feelings on the occasion, but they were also designed for the Church at large, and were intended to be used in the Church in all times to come, and hence a general form is given to the sentiments, and the local allusion is barely referred to, or omitted altogether. It is, perhaps, also an indication of the nature of true devotion, that it will turn away from, or forget, for the time, the personal and local circumstances of distress, and give utterance to sentiments of piety that will express the feelings of the children of God in all ages and in all circumstances. The psalm thus becomes one of general use; and the language is such as is adapted to the use of the Church in all generations.

It is also objected by De Wette that the psalm is devoid of all the tender feelings which we should suppose the heart of a father would pour out on such an occasion. But to this it may be replied, that this was not the occasion to pour out such feelings. The thoughts are fixed on his own danger; on the number of his enemies; on the suddenness of the peril; on the great ingrati-

PSALM III.

A Psalm of David, when he fled *v* from Absalom his son.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many *are* they that rise up against me.

2 Many *there be* which say of

v 2 Sam. xv., xviii.

tude and crime of those who had risen up against him. It is a time to look to God for help; not a time to express affection for an ungrateful and rebellious son. When this son died—when he was put to death in violation of the commands and entreaties of himself as a king and a father (2 Sam. xviii. 5, 12, 14)—he poured forth *all* his heart in language such as had never been used before, and has never been equalled since, 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

§ 3. *Analysis of the psalm.*—The psalm is naturally and regularly divided into four strophes or parts, each one embracing two verses; and in three of them closed by the word *Selah*, indicating a pause either in the sense, in the melody, or in both. See Notes on ver 2.

I. The first is expressive of the anxiety of the psalmist from the fact that many enemies had risen up against him, vers. 1, 2.

II. The second expresses his confidence in God in the midst of his troubles, vers. 3, 4. He was his shield and his helper, and he heard his prayer out of his holy hill.

III. The third refers to the fact that in his troubles he had, contrary to what there had been reason to apprehend, been permitted to lie down calmly and to sleep, and to arise again in the morning. In view of this, refreshed and invigorated by rest, and having this new proof of the Divine favour and protection, he says that he would not be afraid though ten thousands of people should set themselves against him round about, vers. 5, 6.

IV. In the fourth part, the psalmist calls upon God to arise and save him; for in other times he had smitten his enemies upon their cheek bone, and had broken the teeth of the ungodly, and salvation belonged only unto him, vers. 7, 8.

¶ *A Psalm of David.* Literally, belonging to David; that is, belonging to him as the author. This is marked in the Hebrew as the first verse, and so in the Syriac version, the Latin Vulgate, and the Septuagint, making in the Hebrew, and in each of these versions, nine verses in the psalm instead of eight, as in our translation. This *may* have been prefixed to the psalm by the author himself, for it was not uncommon in ancient times for an author to prefix his name to his own composition, as is commonly done by the apostle Paul in his epistles. It is not absolutely certain, however, that this was done in the Psalms by the authors themselves, but it may have been done by him who collected and arranged the Psalms, indicating the prevalent belief in regard to the authorship, and under the Spirit of inspiration. ¶ *When he fled.* On the occasion of his fleeing. That is, it was composed at that time, or was subsequently composed in remembrance of it. See Introd., § 2. ¶ *From Absalom his son.* See Introd., § 2.

1. LORD, *how are they increased.* How are they multiplied; or, how numerous they are. Perhaps the idea is, that at first they seemed to be comparatively few in number, but had now so multiplied as to endanger his crown and life. This is an appropriate expression on the supposition that it refers to Absalom. At first the number of those who adhered to Absalom was not so great as to excite much alarm; but by the arts of a demagogue, by complaining of the government, by saying that if *he* were made a judge in the land, every man would have justice done him (2 Sam. xv. 4, 5), he won the hearts of the people, and gathered so many under his standard as to make it necessary that the king should flee from Jerusalem to a place of safety. ¶ *That trouble me.* Literally, *my enemies.* The allusion is to those who were now enlisted under Absalom, and who were engaged in endeavouring to overthrow the govern-

my soul, *There* [w] *is* no help for him in God. Selah.

[w] Psa. lxxi. 11.

ment. ¶ *Many* are *they that rise up against me.* That is, that have become my enemies.

2. *Many* there be *which say of my soul.* Or rather, perhaps, of his "*life,*" for so the word here used—נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*—frequently means (Lev. xvii. 11; Deut. xii. 23; Gen. ix. 4; xxxv. 18; 1 Kings xvii. 21). The object of their persecution, as here stated, was not his *soul,* as such, in the sense in which we now understand the word, but his *life;* and they now said that they were secure of that, and that all things indicated that God would not now interfere to save him. They were perfectly sure of their prey. Compare 2 Sam. xvii. 1—4. ¶ There is *no help for him in God.* He is entirely forsaken. He has no power of defending himself, and no hope of escaping from us now, and all the indications are, that God does not intend to interpose and deliver him. Circumstances, in the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xvi. seq.), were such as to seem to justify this taunt. David had been driven away from his throne and his capital. God had not protected him when he had his armed men and his friends around him, and when he was entrenched in a strong city; and now he was a forsaken fugitive, fleeing almost alone, and seeking a place of safety. If God had not defended him on his throne and in his capital; if he had suffered him to be driven away without interposing to save him, much less was there reason to suppose that he would now interpose in his behalf; and hence they exultingly said that there was no hope for his life, even in that God in whom he had trusted. It is no uncommon thing in this world for good men to be in similar circumstances of trial, when they *seem* to be so utterly forsaken by God as well as men, that their foes exultingly say they are entirely abandoned. ¶ *Selah.* סֶלָה. Much has been written on this word, and still its meaning does not appear to be wholly determined. It is rendered in the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase, לְעָלְמִין, *lealmin, for ever,* or *to eternity.* In the Latin Vulgate it is omitted, as if it were no part of the text. In the Septuagint it is rendered Διάψαλμα, supposed to refer to some variation or modulation of the voice in singing. Schleusner, *Lex.* The word occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms, and three times in the book of Habakkuk, iii. 3, 9, 13. It is never translated in our version, but in all these places the original word *Selah* is retained. It occurs only in poetry, and is supposed to have had some reference to the singing or cantillation of the poetry, and to be probably a musical term. In general, also, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes that the most probable meaning of this musical term or note is *silence,* or *pause,* and that its use was, in chanting the words of the psalm, to direct the singer *to be silent, to pause a little,* while the instruments played an interlude or harmony. Perhaps this is all that can now be known of the meaning of the word, and this is enough to satisfy every reasonable inquiry. It is probable, if this was the use of the term, that it would commonly correspond with the sense of the passage, and be inserted where the sense made a pause suitable; and this will doubtless be found usually to be the fact. But any one acquainted at all with the character of musical notation will perceive at once that we are not to suppose that this would be invariably or necessarily the fact, for the musical pauses by no means always correspond with pauses in the sense. This word, therefore, can furnish very little assistance in determining the meaning of the passages where it is found. Ewald supposes, differing from this view, that it rather indicates that in the places where it occurs the voice is

3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield [1]for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cried unto the LORD with

[1] Or, *about.*

to be raised, and that it is synonymous with *up, higher, loud,* or *distinct,* from סָל, *sal,* סָלַל, *salal, to ascend.* Those who are disposed to inquire further respecting its meaning, and the uses of musical pauses in general, may be referred to Ugolin., 'Thesau. Antiq. Sacr.,' tom. xxii.

3. *But thou, O* LORD, art *a shield for me.* Not only in these dangers, but in all dangers. The declaration here has a general form, as if he could trust in him at all times. It shows what his feelings were on the occasion here referred to, when dangers stood thick around him, and what his feelings habitually were in times of peril. The shield was a well-known part of ancient armour, of use, according to the ancient modes of warfare, when swords, and spears, and arrows were employed, but of use only then, since they would constitute no defence against a musket or cannon-ball. They were usually made of tough and thick hides, fastened to a rim, and so attached to the left arm that they could be readily thrown before the body when attacked, or so that, as they were usually held, the vital parts of the body would be protected. See Notes on Eph. vi. 14—16. From this use of the shield it was natural to speak of God as the *shield,* or the *Protector* of his people—an appellation which is often given to him in the Scriptures (Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Ps. xxviii. 7; cxix. 114; cxliv. 2; xxxiii. 20; lxxxiv. 11; Prov. xxx. 5. ¶ *My glory.* My honour, or the source of my honour. That is, he bestows upon me all the honour that I have, and it is my glory that I may put my trust in him. I regard it as an honour to be permitted, in times of danger and trouble, to rely on him—a sentiment in which every true child of God will unite. ¶ *And the lifter up of my head.* The head, in time of trouble and sorrow, is naturally bowed down, as if overpowered with the weight of affliction. See Ps. xxxv. 14: "I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother;" Ps. xxxviii. 6: "I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day." Comp. Ps. xlii. 5; xliv. 25; lvii. 6; John xix. 30. To lift up the head, therefore, or to raise one up, is to relieve his distresses, or to take away his troubles. Such a helper, David says, he had always found God to be, and he looks to him as one who is able to help him still. That is, he feels that God can so entirely take away his present griefs as to reinstate him in his former happy and honourable condition.

4. *I cried unto the* LORD. That is, in these troubles, as he had always done in affliction. The form of the verb here is *future*—"I will cry" or call unto the Lord; probably, however, designed to state a general habit with him, that when troubles came he always called on the Lord. He speaks now of himself as if in the midst of the trouble; gives utterance to the feeling which he has always had in his sorrows; and says, "I *will* call upon the Lord," thus declaring his purpose to make his appeal confidently to him. Thus, the language is not so much retrospective as it is indicative of the uniform state of his mind in the midst of afflictions. ¶ *With my voice.* Not merely mentally, but he gave utterance to the deep anguish of his soul in words. So the Saviour did in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 39); and so, perhaps, most persons do in deep affliction. It is natural then to *cry out* for help; and besides the fact that we may hope that *any* prayer then, though mental only, would bring relief by being answered, there is a measure of relief found by the very act of giving *utterance* or *vent* to the deep and, as it were, pent-up feelings of the soul. In calmer times we are satisfied with unuttered aspirations, with gentle

my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

5 I laid me down and slept; [x] I awaked: for the LORD sustained me.

x Psa. cxxvii. 2.

ejaculations, with sweet mental communion with God; in overwhelming trials we give utterance to our feelings in the earnest *language* of pleading. ¶ *And he heard me.* Or, "then he hears me;" that is, when I call. The psalmist refers to what he had constantly found to be true, that God was a hearer of prayer. ¶ *Out of his holy hill.* Zion. See Notes on Ps. ii. 6. That was the place to which David had removed the ark, and which was regarded, therefore, as the peculiar dwelling-place of the Most High. To him, as dwelling in Zion, prayer was accustomed to be offered, and there he was accustomed to answer prayer. To this fact David here refers as one that had been illustrated in his former days. To that God who *had* thus answered him he felt that he might confidently appeal now. ¶ *Selah.* Indicating another strophe or musical pause. See Notes on ver. 2.

5. *I laid me down and slept.* Notwithstanding these troubles and dangers I had such confidence that God hears prayer, and such calm trust in his protection, that I laid me down gently and slept securely. The psalmist mentions this as a remarkable proof of the Divine protection and favour. He was driven from his capital, his throne, and his home. He was compelled to wander as a poor fugitive, accompanied by only a few friends. He was pursued by enemies, who were numbered by thousands. He was made an exile, and persecuted by his own son; and with this son there were men of age and of experience in war. The forces of his enemies might come upon him at any moment. In these circumstances, persecuted as he was, and under all the anxiety and distress which he felt in view of the ungrateful conduct of his own son, he regarded it as a singular proof of the Divine favour, and as an illustration of the peace which confidence in God gives to those who put their trust in him, that on such a dreadful night he was permitted to lie calmly down and sleep. As such a proof and illustration it may be regarded here:—a proof of the unspeakable value of the Divine favour, and an illustration of the effect of confidence in God in giving calmness and peace of mind in time of trouble. Ps. cxxvii. 2. ¶ *I awaked.* Still safe and secure. He had not been suddenly attacked by his foes, and made to sleep the sleep of death; he had not been crushed by anguish of spirit. That we are "awaked" in the morning after a night's refreshing slumber; that we are raised up again to the enjoyments of life; that we are permitted again to greet our friends and to unite with them in the privileges of devotion, should always be regarded as a new proof of the goodness of God, and should lead to acts of praise. We have no power to awake ourselves; and when we remember how many are taken away from our world each night—how many there are who lie down to sleep to wake no more, we should never rise from a bed of repose without giving our first thoughts in gratitude to our Great Preserver. ¶ *For the* LORD *sustained me.* He kept me from danger; he preserved me from death. And it is as true now as it was then, that God is the supporter of life when men sleep. He guards us; he causes the action of the heart to be continued as it propels the blood through our frame; he secures the gentle heaving of the lungs, both when we slumber and when we wake.

6. *I will not be afraid.* As the result of this new proof of the Divine protection, and in view of all that God has done and has promised, the psalmist now says that he would not be afraid though any number of foes should rise upagainst him. *Perhaps* this confiding and exulting spirit may be regarded

6 I [y] will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek-

[y] Psa. xxvii. 1, etc.

in some measure as the *result* of the calm and refreshing slumber which he had enjoyed. The mind as well as the body had been refreshed and invigorated. With the bright light of a new morning he looked with more cheerful views and hopes on the things around him, and felt new strength to meet the dangers to which he was exposed. Who in trouble and sorrow has not felt this? Who has not experienced the influence of the slumbers of a night and of the light of the morning, in giving new vigour and inspiring new hopes, as if the returning day was an emblem of brighter scenes in life, and the passing away of the shades of night a token that all trouble and sorrow would flee away? ¶ *Of ten thousands of people.* Myriads:—Though myriads are arrayed against me. He does not, of course, pretend to any exactness here; but he felt that the number of his enemies was very great. This *was* the case in the rebellion of Absalom. Ahithophel proposed to Absalom to "*choose out* twelve thousand men" with whom he might pursue after David, implying that the number with him was actually much greater than that, (2 Sam. xvii. 1.) ¶ *That have set* themselves *against me.* That have arrayed themselves against me; or that have risen up in rebellion against me. ¶ *Round about.* Intending to hem me in on every side. Of course this was to be apprehended in such a rebellion; yet David says that he could now look with calmness on all this, for he had confidence in God. Comp. Ps. lvi. 3.

7. *Arise, O* LORD. This is a common mode of calling upon God in the Scriptures, as if he had been sitting still, or had been inactive. It is, of course, language taken from human conceptions, for in the intervals of active effort, in labour or in battle, we sit or lie down, and when we engage in toil we arise from our sitting or recumbent posture. So the mind accustoms itself to think of God. The idea is simply that David now calls upon God to interpose in his behalf and to deliver him. ¶ *Save me, O my God.* He was still surrounded by numerous enemies, and he, therefore, calls earnestly upon God to help him. In accordance with a common usage in the Scriptures, and with what is right for all the people of God, he calls him *his* God:—"O *my* God." That is, he was the God whom he recognised as his God in distinction from all idols, and who had manifested himself as his God by the many mercies which he had conferred on him. ¶ *For thou hast smitten all mine enemies.* That is, in former exigencies, or on former occasions. In his conflicts with Saul, with the Philistines, and with the surrounding nations, he had done this; and as the result of all he had established him on the throne, and placed him over the realm. In the remembrance of all this he appeals with the full confidence that what God had done for him before He would do now, and that, notwithstanding he was surrounded with numerous foes, He would again interpose. So we may derive comfort and assurance in present trouble or danger from the recollection of what God has done for us in former times. He who has saved us in former perils can still save us; we may believe that he who did not forsake us in those perils will not leave us now. ¶ Upon *the cheek-bone.* This language seems to be taken from a comparison of his enemies with wild beasts; and the idea is, that God had disarmed them as one would a lion or tiger by breaking out his teeth. The cheek-bone denotes the bone in which the teeth are placed; and to smite that, is to disarm the animal. The

bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

8 Salvation [z] *belongeth* unto the Lord: thy blessing [a] *is* upon thy people. Selah.

[z] Isa. xliii. 11. [a] Psa. cxv. 13.

idea here is not that of *insult*, therefore; but the meaning is simply that he had deprived them of the power of doing him wrong. ¶ *Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.* The same idea is here expressed under another form, *as if* the teeth of wild animals were broken out, rendering them harmless. As God had thus disarmed his enemies in times past, the psalmist hoped that he would do the same thing now, and he confidently called on him to do it.

8. *Salvation* belongeth *unto the* LORD. That is, it appertains to God alone to save. The psalmist had no expectation of saving himself; he had no confidence in the unaided prowess of his own arm. If he was to be saved he felt that it was to be only by God, and the praise of this was to be given to Him. The particular reference here is to temporal deliverance, or deliverance from the dangers which surrounded him then; but the declaration is as true of spiritual deliverance—of the salvation of the soul—as it is of deliverance from temporal danger. In both cases it is true that God only saves, and that all the praise is due to him. ¶ *Thy blessing* is *upon thy people.* Or perhaps, rather, "thy blessing be upon thy people," regarding this as a *prayer* rather than an *affirmation.* It is true, indeed, as an affirmation (comp. Ps. ii. 12); but it accords better with the connection here, and is a more appropriate conclusion of the psalm to regard it as a petition, expressing an earnest desire that the blessing of God might ever rest upon his own people. Then the thoughts of the psalmist are turned away from his own perils to the condition of others; from his individual case to that of the Church at large; and he prays that all others may find the same favours from God which he had so richly enjoyed, and which he hoped still to enjoy. It is one of the characteristics of true piety thus to turn from our own condition to that of others, and to desire that what we enjoy may be partaken of by the people of God everywhere.

PSALM IV.

§ 1. *The title of the psalm.*—The title of this psalm is "To the chief Musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David." This phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," occurs at the beginning of fifty-three psalms, and at the close of the hymn in Hab. iii. 19. It is uniformly rendered "to the chief Musician," and means that the psalm was intended for him, or was to be given to him, probably to regulate the manner of performing it. In no one instance does the title imply that he was the author. The word rendered "Chief Musician," מְנַצֵּחַ—*menatzzaiahh*, is derived from נָצַח—*natzahh*, properly meaning *to shine*, but not used in kal. In the Piel form it means to be conspicuous; to be over anything; to be chief; to be superintendent (2 Chron. ii. 2, 18; xxxiv. 12), and then it means to lead in music. The meaning of the form used here, and in the other places where it occurs as a title to a psalm, is "Chief Musician," or precentor; and the idea is, that the psalm is to be performed under his direction; or that the music is to be directed and adapted by him. In the case before us there is a particular designation of the *instrument* that was to be employed in the music; which occurs also in Ps. vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxvii., lxxvi.; where the same instrument is mentioned as here. In Ps. viii., lxxxi., lxxxiv., another instrument is mentioned; and in Ps. xlv., lx., lxxx., another instrument still. It would seem that the author of the psalm frequently adapted his poem to a particular kind of instrument, but left the further arrangement of the music to the precentor himself. The word *Neginoth*, plural of *Neginah* —נְגִינָה—means properly *stringed instruments.* It occurs in the title of the following psalms, iv., vi., liv., lv., lxvii., lxxvi. It means in these cases that the psalm was designed to be sung with the accompaniment of some stringed instrument, or under the direction of the musician, who presided over the department of

stringed instruments. It designates nothing as to the *kind* of stringed instruments which were to be employed.

§ 2. *The author of the psalm.*—This psalm, like the preceding, purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of this opinion. Indeed, there is some internal probability that, if the former psalm was composed by him, this was also; for as that appears to be a *morning* psalm (Ps. iii. 5), so this seems to be its counterpart, and to be designed to be an *evening* psalm, vers. 4, 8. The general resemblance in the structure, and the reference in the one to the morning, and in the other to the evening, show that the two were designed, probably, to be a kind of *double* psalm, to be used on the same day, the one in the morning, and the other in the evening. If this is so, and if David was the author of the third psalm, then there is the same reason to suppose that he was the author also of this. It may be added there has been a general concurrence of opinion in the belief that the psalm was written by David.

§ 3. *The occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—There is nothing in the psalm, or in the title, to determine this question, and it is now impossible to settle it with certainty. The Jewish interpreters generally, and most Christian expositors, suppose that it was composed on the same occasion as the preceding, in relation to the rebellion of Absalom. But there is nothing in the psalm itself which will certainly determine this, or which would make it improbable that it might have been composed at some other time in the life of David. It should be said, however, that there is nothing in the psalm which is inconsistent with that supposition, especially as the manifest purpose of the psalm is to make the occasion, whatever it was, one on which to utter great thoughts that would be valuable at all times. There is some internal evidence that this psalm was composed in reference to the same circumstances as the preceding, with this difference, that *that* was when the writer was in the midst of his troubles, and when he thought it a great mercy that he had been permitted to enjoy a night of quiet rest (Ps. iii. 5); *this*, when he had obtained deliverance from those troubles, and now felt that he *could* give himself to calm repose without anxiety and fear, ver. 8.

§ 4. *The contents of the psalm.*—The psalm expresses general confidence in God, and a general sense of security. The writer is conscious, indeed, that he has enemies, and that they would "turn" his "glory into shame" if they could; that they are false men who seek his ruin by detractions (ver. 2), but still he has confidence in God that all will be well. Though he has enemies who are seeking to destroy him, yet his mind is so calm that he feels that he can commit himself confidently to God, and lie down and slumber. The general subject, therefore, of the psalm is the fact that confidence in God will make the mind calm in the midst of troubles, and that reliance on his protecting care will enable us to give ourselves at night to undisturbed repose. The following points occur in the psalm on this general subject.

(*a*) The writer calls on God to hear him, and makes it the ground of his petition that he *had* formerly heard him—that he had enlarged him when he was in distress, ver. 1.

(*b*) He addresses directly his enemies, and gives them counsel as to what *they* ought to do, vers. 2—5. He solemnly appeals to them, and asks them how long they would persevere in attempting to turn his glory into shame, ver. 2; he conjures them to remember that all their efforts must be in vain, since the Lord had set apart him that was godly for himself, and would protect him, ver. 3; he exhorts them to stand in awe, and to fear the consequences of the course which they were pursuing, and exhorts them to take proper time to reflect upon it—to think on it in the night, when alone with God, and when away from the excitements of the day, ver. 4; and he entreats them to become themselves true worshippers of God, and to offer to him the sacrifices of righteousness, ver. 5.

(*c*) He contrasts the sources of his own joy and theirs, vers. 6, 7. They were seeking worldly good, and endeavoured to find their happiness in that alone; he desired more than that, and, as the chief source of his joy, asked that God would lift upon him the light of his countenance. He had experienced this, and he says that God "had put gladness into his heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." He had more real happiness in the conscious favour of God than the greatest worldly prosperity without that could afford. Religion will, in time of trouble, give more true happiness than all that the world can bestow.

(*d*) As the result of all, and in view

PSALM IV.

To the [1] chief Musician on Neginoth.
A Psalm of David.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress; [2] have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

2 O ye sons of men, how long

[1] Or, *overseer*, Hab. iii. 19.

[2] Or, *be gracious unto.*

of all these mercies and comforts, he says that he will lie calmly down and sleep. Though he had enemies, his mind is composed and calm; though there may be dangers, he can confide in God; and though he may be less prospered in worldly things than others, he has a joy in religion superior to all that the world can give; and that makes the mind calm as the body is committed to rest in the darkness of the night, ver. 8.

1. *Hear me when I call.* When I pray. The word *hear* in such cases is always used in the sense of "listen to," "hear favourably," or "attend to;" hence in the literal sense it is always true that God *hears* all that is said. The meaning is, "hear and answer me," or grant me what I ask. ¶ *O God of my righteousness.* That is, O my righteous God. This is a common mode of expression in Hebrew. Thus, in Ps. ii. 6, "hill of my holiness," meaning "my holy hill;" Ps. iii. 4, "his hill of holiness," meaning "his holy hill." The psalmist here appeals to God as *his* God—the God in whom he trusted; and as a *righteous* God—a God who would do that which was right, and on whom, therefore, he might rely as one who would protect his own people. The appeal to God as a righteous God implies a conviction in the mind of the psalmist of the justice of his cause; and he asks God merely to do *right* in the case. It is not on the ground of his own claim as a righteous man, but it is that, in this particular case, he was wrongfully persecuted; and he asks God to interpose, and to cause justice to be done. This is always a proper ground of appeal to God. A man may be sensible that in a particular case he has justice on his side, though he has a general conviction that he himself is a sinner; and he may pray to God to cause his enemies to do right, or to lead those whose office it is to decide the case, to do what ought to be done to vindicate his name, or to save him from wrong. ¶ *Thou hast enlarged me* when I was *in distress.* That is, on some former occasion. When he was *pressed* or *confined*, and knew not how to escape, God had interposed and had given him room, so that he felt free. He now implores the same mercy again. He feels that the God who had done it in former troubles could do it again; and he asks him to repeat his mercy. The prayer indicates confidence in the power and the unchangeableness of God, and proves that it is right in our prayers to recall the former instances of the Divine interposition, as an argument, or as a ground of hope that God would again interpose. ¶ *Have mercy upon me.* In my present troubles. That is, Pity me, and have compassion on me, as thou hast done in former times. Who that has felt the assurance that God has heard his prayer in former times, and has delivered him from trouble, will not go to him with the more confident assurance that he will hear him again?

2. *O ye sons of men.* Turning from God to men; from Him in whom he hoped for protection to those who were engaged in persecuting him. We are not, of course, to suppose that they were present with him, but this is an earnest, poetic remonstrance, *as if* they were with him. The reference is doubtless to Absalom and his followers; and he calls them "sons of men," as having human feelings, passions, and purposes, in strong distinction from that righteous God to whom he had just made his solemn appeal. God was holy, true, and just, and he might appeal to Him; they

will ye turn my glory into shame; *how long* will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing? Selah.

3 But know that the LORD

were ambitious and wicked, and from them he had nothing to hope. He looked upon God as righteous altogether; he looked upon them as altogether depraved and wicked. God he regarded as his just Protector; them he regarded as seeking only to wrong and crush him. ¶ *How long.* The phrase here used might refer either to *time* or to *extent.* How long in regard to *time,*—or to what *degree* or *extent* will you thus persecute me? The former, however, seems to be the true signification. ¶ Will ye turn *my glory into shame.* My honour, or what becomes my rank and station. If this refers to the rebellion in the time of Absalom, the allusion is to the fact that his enemies were endeavouring to rob him of his sceptre and his crown, and to reduce him to the lowest condition of beggary and want; and he asks with earnestness how long they intended to do him so great injustice and wrong. ¶ *Will ye love vanity.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 1. That is, how long will you act as if you were in love with a vain and impracticable thing; a thing which *must* be hopeless in the end. The idea is, that God had chosen him, and anointed him, and had determined that he should be king (ver. 3), and therefore that their efforts *must be* ultimately unsuccessful. The object at which they were aiming could not be accomplished, and he asks how long they would thus engage in what must, from the nature of the case, be fruitless. ¶ And *seek after leasing.* The word *leasing* is the old English word for *lie.* The idea here is, that they were pursuing a course which would yet prove to be a delusion—the hope of overturning his throne. The same question, in other respects, may be asked now. Men are seeking that which cannot be accomplished, and are acting under the influence of a lie. What else are the promises of permanent happiness in the pursuits of pleasure and ambition? What else are their attempts to overthrow religion and virtue in the world? ¶ *Selah.* See Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

3. *But know.* This is addressed to those whom, in the previous verse, he had called the "sons of men;" that is, his foes. This is designed to show them that their opposition to him must be vain, since God had determined to set him apart for his own service, and would therefore hear his prayer for relief and protection. ¶ *That the* LORD *hath set apart.* That Jehovah had done this; that is, that he had designated him to accomplish a certain work, or that he regarded him as an instrument to perform it. He would, therefore, protect him whom he had thus appointed; and their efforts were really directed against Jehovah himself, and must be vain. ¶ *Him that is godly for himself.* For his own purposes, or to accomplish his own designs. The reference is here undoubtedly to the psalmist himself; that is, to David. The word "godly," as applied to himself, is probably used in contrast with his enemies as being engaged in wicked designs, to wit, in rebellion, and in seeking to dispossess him of his lawful throne. The psalmist felt that his cause was a righteous cause, that he had done nothing to deserve this treatment at their hands; and that he had been originally exalted to the throne because God regarded him as a friend of himself and of his cause; and because he knew that he would promote the interests of that cause. The word here rendered "*godly,*" חָסִיד, *khasid,* is derived from חֶסֶד, *hesed,* which means desire, ardour, zeal; and then kindness, benignity, love toward God or man. Here the word properly denotes one who has love to God, or one who is truly pious; and it is correctly rendered *godly.* Comp. Ps. xxx. 4, 5; xxxi. 23; xxxvii. 28. The idea is, that as God had appointed him for his own great purposes, the real aim of the rebels was to oppose

hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not;

Jehovah; and the purposes in which they were engaged could not, therefore, be successful. ¶ *The* LORD *will hear when I call unto him.* As I am engaged in his service; as I am appointed to accomplish a certain purpose for him, I may confidently believe that he will hear me, and will deliver me out of their hands. Is not this always the true ground of encouragement to pray—that if God has a purpose to accomplish by us he will hear our prayer, and save us from danger, and deliver us out of the hand of our enemies? And should not this be the main design in our prayers—that God *would* thus spare us that we may accomplish the work which he has given us to do?

4. *Stand in awe.* Still addressed to those who in ver. 2 are called "sons of men;" that is, to his enemies. This is rendered by Prof. Alexander, "Rage and sin not." The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it, "Tremble before him, and sin not." The Latin Vulgate, *Irascimini* — "be angry." The LXX. ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, "Be ye angry, and sin not"—a rendering which Paul seems to have had in his eye in Eph. iv. 26, where the same language is found. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that, in this case, or by so quoting this language, Paul meant to give his sanction to the Septuagint translation of the passage. The truth doubtless is, that he found this language in that version, and that he quoted it, not as a correct translation, but as exactly expressing an idea which he wished to convey,—in the same way as he would have quoted an expression from a Greek classic. It was made to convey an inspired sentiment by his use of it; whether it was a fair translation of the original Hebrew was another question. For the meaning of the sentiment, see Notes on Eph. iv. 26. The original word here—רָגַז, *ragaz*, —means to be moved, disturbed, disquieted, thrown into commotion; and as this may be by anger, fear, or grief, so the word comes to be used with reference to any one of these things.—Gesenius, *Lex.* The connection here would seem to require that it should be understood with reference to *fear* —since we cannot suppose that the writer would counsel them to be moved or agitated by wrath or anger, and since there was no ground for exhorting them to be moved by grief. The true idea is, doubtless, that which is conveyed in our translation—that they were to fear; to stand in awe; to reflect on the course which they were pursuing, and on the consequences of that course, and by so doing to cease from their plans, and to sin no further. God had determined to protect him whom they were engaged in persecuting, and, in prosecuting their plans, they must come into conflict with His power, and be overcome. The counsel, therefore, is just such as may properly be given to all men who are engaged in executing plans of evil. ¶ *And sin not.* That is, by continuing to prosecute these plans. Your course is one of rebellion against Jehovah, since he has determined to protect him whom you are endeavouring to drive from his throne, and any further prosecution of your schemes must be regarded as additional guilt. They had indeed sinned by what they had already done; they would only sin the more unless they abandoned their undertaking. ¶ *Commune with your own heart.* Heb., "Speak with your own heart;" that is, consult your own *heart* on the subject, and be guided by the result of such a deliberation. The language is similar to what we often use when we say, "Consult your better judgment," or "Consult your feelings," or "Take counsel of your own good sense;" as if a man were divided against himself, and his passions, his ambition, or his avarice, were contrary to his own better judgment. The word *heart* here is used in the sense in which we

commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

5 Offer the sacrifices [b] of righteousness; and put your trust in the LORD.

6 *There be* many that say, Who

[b] Deut. xxxiii. 19.

now use it as denoting the seat of the affections, and especially of right affections; and the meaning is, "Do not take counsel of, or be influenced by, your head, your will, your passions, your evil advisers and counsellors; but consult your own better feelings, your generous emotions, your sense of right, and act accordingly." Men would frequently be much more likely to do right if they would consult their *hearts* as to what should be done than they are in following the counsels which actually influence them. The secret, silent teachings of the *heart*—the heart when unbiassed and uninfluenced by bad counsellors—is often our best and safest guide. ¶ *Upon your bed.* Admirable advice to those who are engaged in plans of wickedness. In the silence of night; in solitary musings on our bed; when withdrawn from the world, and from all the promptings of passion and ambition, and when, if at any time, we cannot but feel that the eye of God is upon us, the mind is most likely to be in a proper state to review its plans, and to inquire whether those plans can be expected to meet the Divine approbation. ¶ *And be still.* When you are thus quiet, reflect on your doings. For a most beautiful description of the effect of night and silence in recalling wicked men from their schemes, see Job xxxiii. 14—17. Comp. Notes on that passage. ¶ *Selah.* This, as explained in the Notes on Ps. iii. 2, marks a musical pause. The pause here would well accord with the sense, and would most happily occur after the allusion to the quiet communion on the bed, and the exhortation to be still.

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.* Offer righteous sacrifices; that is, sacrifices prompted by right motives, and in accordance with the prescriptions in the law of God. This appears to be addressed also to those who in ver. 2 are called "sons of men;" that is, those who were arrayed against the psalmist. According to the common opinion this psalm was composed by David on occasion of his being driven from his throne and kingdom; and, of course, Zion, the ark, and the tabernacle, were in the hands of his enemies. The exhortation here may be, either that, as his enemies were now in possession of the usual seat of public worship, they would conduct the worship of God by keeping up the regular daily sacrifice; or, more probably, it means that in view of their sins, particularly in this rebellion, and as the result of the calm reflection to which he had exhorted them in ver. 4, they should now manifest their repentance, and their purpose to turn to God, by presenting to him an appropriate sacrifice. They were sinners. They were engaged in an unholy cause. He exhorts them to pause, to reflect, to turn to God, and to bring a sacrifice for their sins, that their guilt might be blotted out. ¶ *And put your trust in the* LORD. That is, turn from your evil ways, and confide in God in all his arrangements, and submit to him. Comp. Ps. ii. 12.

6. There be *many that say.* Some have supposed, as De Wette and others, that the allusion of the psalmist here is to his own followers, and that the reference is to their anxious fears in their misfortunes, as if they were poor and forsaken, and knew not from whence the supply of their wants would come. The more probable interpretation, however, is that the allusion is to the general anxiety of mankind, as contrasted with the feelings and desires of the psalmist himself in reference to the manner in which the desire was to be gratified. That is, the general inquiry among mankind is, Who will show us good?

will show us *any* good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

7 Thou hast put gladness in

Or, where shall we obtain that which seems to us to be good, or which will promote our happiness? ¶ *Who will show us* any *good?* The word "*any*" here is improperly supplied by the translators. The question is more emphatic as it is in the original—"Who will show us *good?*" That is, Where shall happiness be found? In what does it consist? How is it to be obtained? What will contribute to it? This is the *general* question asked by mankind. The *answer* to this question, of course, would be very various, and the psalmist evidently intends to place the answer which *he* would give in strong contrast with that which would be given by the mass of men. Some would place it in wealth; some in honour; some in palaces and pleasure grounds; some in gross sensual pleasure; some in literature; and some in refined social enjoyments. In contrast with all such views of the sources of true happiness, the psalmist says that he regards it as consisting in the favour and friendship of God. To him that was enough; and in this respect his views stood in strong contrast with those of the world around him. The *connection* here seems to be this—the psalmist saw those persons who were arrayed against him intent on their own selfish aims, prosecuting their purposes, regardless of the honour of God and the rights of other men; and he is led to make the reflection that this is the *general* character of mankind. They are seeking for happiness; they are actively employed in prosecuting their own selfish ends and purposes. They live simply to know how they shall be *happy*, and they prosecute any scheme which would seem to promise happiness, regardless of the rights of others and the claims of religion. ¶ LORD, *lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* That is, in contrast with the feelings and plans of others. In the pursuit of what *they* regarded as good they were engaged in purposes of gain, of pleasure, or of ambition; he, on the contrary, asked only the favour of God—the light of the Divine countenance. The phrase, "to lift up the light of the countenance" on one, is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, and is expressive of favour and friendship. When we are angry or displeased, the face seems covered with a dark cloud; when pleased, it brightens up and expresses benignity. There is undoubtedly allusion in this expression to the sun as it rises free from clouds and tempests, seeming to smile upon the world. The language here was not improbably derived from the benediction which the High Priest was commanded to pronounce when he blessed the people of Israel (Num. vi. 24—26), "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." It may be added here, that what the psalmist regarded as the *supreme good*—the favour and friendship of God—is expressive of true piety in all ages and at all times. While the world is busy in seeking happiness in other things—in wealth, pleasure, gaiety, ambition, sensual delights—the child of God feels that true happiness is to be found only in religion, and in the service and friendship of the Creator; and, after all the anxious inquiries which men make, and the various experiments tried in succeeding ages, to find the source of true happiness, all who ever find it will be led to seek it where the psalmist said his happiness was found—in the light of the countenance of God.

7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart.* Thou hast made me happy, to wit, in the manner specified in ver. 6. Many had sought happiness in other things; he had sought it in the favour of the Lord, and the Lord had given him a degree of happiness which they had never found in the most pros-

my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

8 I will [c] both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

[c] Psa. iii. 5.

perous worldly condition. This happiness had its seat in the "*heart*," and not in any external circumstances. All true happiness must have its seat there, for if the heart is sad, of what avail are the most prosperous external circumstances? ¶ *More than in the time.* More than they have had in the time referred to; or, more than I should have in such circumstances. ¶ That *their corn and their wine increased.* When they were most successful and prosperous in worldly things. This shows that when, in ver. 6, he says that many inquired who would show them any *good*, what they aspired after was worldly prosperity, here expressed by an increase of corn and wine. The word rendered *corn* means grain in general; the word rendered *wine* — תִּירוֹשׁ —*térosh*—means properly *must, new wine*, Isa. lxv. 8. The reference here is probably to the joy of harvest, when the fruits of the earth were gathered in, an occasion among the Hebrews, as it is among most people, of joy and rejoicing.

8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.* The word "*both*" here means *at the same time;* that is, I will alike be in peace, and I will lie down and will sleep; I will have a mind at peace (or, in tranquillity) when I lie down, and will sleep calmly. This is said in view of his confidence in God, and of his belief that God would preserve him. He had put his trust in him; he had sought his happiness in him, and now he felt assured that he had nothing to fear, and, at peace with God, he would lie down and compose himself to rest. This is the counterpart of what is said in Ps. iii. 5. There he says in the morning, that, though surrounded by fear, he *had* been permitted to lie calmly down and sleep; here he says, that, though he *is* surrounded by fear, he has such confidence in God, that he *will* give himself to quiet slumber. His mind was free from anxiety as to the result of the present troubles; he had calm confidence in God; he committed all to him; and thus gave himself to rest. No one can fail to admire the beauty of this; and no one can fail to perceive that entire confidence in God, and an assurance that all things are under his control, are best adapted of all things to give peaceful days and nights. ¶ *For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.* There are two ideas here: (*a*) One a confidence that he would abide in safety; (*b*) the other, that he owed this entirely to the Lord. He had no power to defend himself, and yet he felt assured that he would be safe—for he put his trust entirely in the Lord. The whole language implies unwavering trust or confidence in God, and is thus instructive and useful for all. It teaches us (1) that in the midst of troubles we may put our trust in God; and (2) that religion is adapted to make the mind calm in such circumstances, and to enable its possessor to lie down without anxiety in the slumbers of the night, and to pursue without anxiety the duties of the day.

PSALM V.

§ 1. *Author of the psalm.*—This psalm also purports to be a psalm of David, and there is nothing in it to lead us to doubt that this opinion is correct. It is ascribed to him in all the versions, and by all the ancient Hebrew writers, and the contents are such as we might expect from him.

§ 2. *The occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—This is not specified in the title to the psalm, and there is nothing in the psalm itself that can enable us to determine it with certainty. There can be no improbability in supposing that there were some events in

the life of David, or that there were some particular circumstances, which suggested the thoughts in the psalm, but all those local and personal allusions are suppressed, as it does not appear to have been the writer's object to disclose private feelings, but to give utterance to sentiments, though perhaps suggested by private and personal considerations, which might be of permanent use to the church at all times.

There is evidence in the psalm itself that the author at the time of its composition was beset by enemies, and that he was in the midst of peril from the designs of violent men, vers. 6, 8, 9, 10. Who those enemies were, however, he does not specify, for the object was to express sentiments that would be of use to all who might be in similar circumstances, by showing what were the true feelings of piety, and what was the real ground of trust for the people of God at such times; and this object would not have been furthered by any specifications in regard to the foes which surrounded him at the time.

Flaminius (see Rosenmüller) supposes that the psalm was composed in the time of Saul, and in reference to the persecutions which David experienced then; but most interpreters have referred it to the time of Absalom's rebellion. Most of the Jewish writers, according to Kimchi (see De Wette), suppose that it had reference to Doeg and Ahithophel; but, as De Wette remarks, since they lived at different times, it cannot be supposed that the psalm had reference to them both. There is no improbability in supposing that the psalm was composed with reference to the same circumstances as the two preceding,—that important event in the life of David when his own son rose up in rebellion against him, and drove him from his throne. In those prolonged and fearful troubles it is by no means improbable that the royal poet would give utterance to his feelings in more than one poetic effusion, or that some new phase of the trouble would suggest some new reflections, and lead him anew to seek consolation in religion, and to express his confidence in God. The psalm has a sufficient resemblance to the two preceding to accord with this supposition, and it can be read with profit with those scenes in view.

§ 3. *Contents of the psalm.*—The psalm, so far as the sentiment is concerned, may be properly regarded as divided into four parts:—

I. An earnest prayer of the author to God to hear him; to attend to his cry, and to deliver him, vers. 1—3. His prayer in the morning he would direct to him, and with the returning light of day he would look up to him. In his troubles his first act would be each day to call upon God.

II. An expression of unwavering confidence in God as the protector and the friend of the righteous, and the enemy of all wickedness, vers. 4—7. God, he was assured, had no pleasure in wickedness; would not suffer evil to dwell in his presence; would abhor all that was false and deceitful, and he might therefore, in all his troubles, put his trust in him. In view of this fact—this characteristic of the Divine nature—he says that he would enter his holy temple, where prayer was accustomed to be made, with confidence, and worship with profound reverence, ver. 7.

III. Prayer to God, in view of all this, for his guidance and protection in his perplexities, vers. 8—10. He felt himself surrounded by dangers; he was in perplexity as to the true way of safety; his enemies were powerful, numerous, and treacherous, and he beseeches God, therefore, to interpose and to deliver him from them—even by cutting them off. He prays that they might fall by their own counsels, and that, as they had rebelled against God, they might be checked and punished as they deserved.

IV. An exhortation, founded on these views, for all to put their trust in God, vers. 11, 12. What he had found to be true, all others would find to be true; and as he in his troubles had seen reason to put *his* trust in God, and had not been disappointed, so he exhorts all others, in similar circumstances, to do the same.

To the chief musician. See Note on the title to Ps. iv. ¶ *Upon Nehiloth.* The title of Psalm iv. is, "upon Neginoth." As that refers to a musical instrument, so it is probable that this does, and that the idea here is that this psalm was intended particularly for the music-master that had special charge of this instrument, or who presided over those that played on it. Perhaps the idea is that this psalm was specially designed to be accompanied with this instrument. The word here, Nehiloth—נְחִילוֹת, sing. נְחִילָה—is supposed by Gesenius, *Lex.*, to denote a flute, or pipe, as being *perforated*, from חָלַל—*khalal, to bore.* The word occurs only in this place. Very

PSALM V.

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth.
A Psalm of David.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

various opinions have been entertained of its meaning. See Hengstenberg, *Com.* The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint understand it as meaning *inheritance*—the same as נְחִלָּה—*nahhalah*, and as being somehow designed to refer to the people of God *as* a heritage. Lat. Vulg. In finem pro ea, quæ hereditatem consequitur, psalmus David. So the Septuagint—ὑπὲρ τῆς κληρονομούσης. So Luther, Für das Erbe. What was the precise idea affixed to this it is not very easy to determine. Luther explains it, "according to the title, this is the general idea of the psalm, that the author prays for the inheritance or heritage of God, desiring that the people of God may be faithful to him, and may always adhere to him." The true interpretation, however, is evidently to regard this as an instrument of music, and to consider the psalm as adapted to be sung with the instrument of music specified. Why it was adapted particularly to *that* instrument of music cannot now be determined. Horsley renders it "upon the flutes." Comp. Ugolin. Thesau. Ant. Sac.; tom. xxxii. pp. 158—170. ¶ *A Psalm of David.* See introd. to Ps. iii.

1. *Give ear to my words*, O LORD. We naturally incline the ear towards any one when we wish to hear distinctly what he says, and we turn away the ear when we do not. The meaning here is, David prayed that God would be attentive to or would regard his prayer. This form of the petition is, that he would attend to his *words*—to what he was about to *express* as his desire. He intended to express only what he wished to be granted. ¶ *Consider my meditation.* Understand; perceive; for so the word rendered *consider* properly means. He desired that he would regard the real import of what is here called his *meditation;* that is, he wished him not merely to attend to his *words*, but to the secret and unexpressed desires of the soul. The idea seems to be that while his words would be sincere and truthful, yet they could not express *all* his meaning. There were desires of the soul which no language could convey—deep, unuttered "groanings" (comp. Rom. viii. 26, 27), which could not be uttered in language. There is a difference, however, in rendering the word translated *meditation.* Most interpreters regard it as derived from הָגָה, *hagah*, to meditate (see Notes on Ps. i. 2),—and as thus denoting *thought*, or *meditation.* Gesenius and some others regard it as derived from הָגַג, *hagag*, obsolete root,—meaning to set on fire, to kindle; and hence, that it means here *heat*, fervour of the mind; and then, fervent cry, or prayer. See *Rosenmüller* also *in loc.* De Wette concurs with Gesenius, and supposes that it should be rendered *sigh* or complaint. Prof. Alexander renders it *thought.* Horsley renders it "my sighing," but says he is in doubt whether it refers to an "internal desire of the mind," in opposition to *words* in the former part of the verse, or to a "prayer uttered *sotto voce*, like the private prayer usually said by every person before he takes his seat in the church"—the "internal motion of the mind towards God." It is not easy to determine the true meaning, but the probability is that it refers to an internal emotion—a fervent, ardent feeling—perhaps finding partial expression in sighs (Rom. viii. 26), but which does not find expression in words, and which words could not convey. He prayed that God would attend to the *whole* desires of the soul—whether expressed or unexpressed.

2. *Hearken unto the voice of my cry.* My cry for assistance. The word *voice* refers to the utterance of his desires, or to his *expressed* wishes in a time of trouble. ¶ *My King, and my God.* Though he was him-

3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

self a king, yet he acknowledged his subjection to God as his supreme Ruler, and looked up to Him to protect him in his dangers, and to restore him to his rights. He was, at the same time, his God—his covenant God—to whom he felt that he was permitted to come in the hour of trouble, and whose blessing he was permitted to invoke. ¶ *For unto thee will I pray.* He had no one else to go to in his troubles, and he felt that he *might* approach the living God. It was his fixed purpose—his regular habit—to pray to him, and to seek his favour and friendship, and he felt that he was permitted to do so now.

3. *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O* LORD. The voice of prayer. Comp. Notes on Ps. iii. 5. Probably he refers here to a general habit of praying in the morning, though he makes a particular reference to his circumstances at that time. Comp. Ps. lv. 17. The psalmist felt, doubtless, that while it was a general duty and privilege to call upon God with the return of each morning, there was a special reason for it in the circumstances in which he then was. See the introduction to the psalm. He was then surrounded by enemies, and was in danger, and it was only in God that he could hope for protection even for a single day. The propriety of looking to God in the morning by prayer commends itself to any reflecting mind. Who knows what a day may bring forth? Who knows what temptations may await him? Who can protect himself from the dangers which may encompass him? Who can enable us to discharge the duties which are incumbent on us every day? Feeble, helpless, sinful, prone to err, in a world of temptation, and surrounded by dangers alike when we see them and when we do not, there is an obvious fitness in looking to God each morning for his guidance and protection; and the resolution of the psalmist here should be the firm purpose of every man. ¶ *In the morning.* Regularly; each morning. ¶ *Will I direct* my prayer *unto thee.* Marg., as in Heb., *set in order.* The word here used—עָרַךְ, *arach*—means properly to place in a row, to put in order, to arrange, *e.g.*, to place wood upon the altar (Gen. xxii. 9; Lev. i. 7); to arrange the showbread on the table (Ex. xl. 23; Lev. xxiv. 6, 8). There is, not improbably, an allusion to these customs in the use of the word here; and the meaning may be, that his prayer would be a regularly arranged service before God. It would be a kind of morning sacrifice, and it would be arranged and performed with a suitable regard to the nature of the service—the fact that it was rendered to the great God. There would be a devout regard to propriety—a serious and solemn attention to the duties involved in the act as the worship of a holy God. Prayer should not be rash; it should not be performed negligently or with a light spirit; it should engage the profound thought of the soul, and it should be performed with the same serious regard to time and to propriety which was demanded in the solemn and carefully prescribed rites of the ancient temple-service. ¶ *And will look up.* The word here used—צָפָה, *tzaphah*—means, properly, to look about, to view from a distance. In Isa. xxi. 5, it refers to a tower which has a wide prospect. Comp. Cant. vii. 4. The idea here is properly that he would watch, narrowly and carefully (as one does who is stationed on a tower), for some token of Divine favour—for some answer to his prayer—for some Divine interposition—for some intimation of the Divine will. This is, perhaps, equivalent to the Saviour's repeated command to "watch and pray." The notion of looking *up* is not necessarily in the word here used, but it indicates the state of mind where there is deep

4 [d] For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee.

5 The foolish shall not stand [1] in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that

[d] Hab. i. 13. [1] Or, *before thine eyes.*

and careful solicitude as to the answer to prayer.

4. *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.* The psalmist here refers to a well-known and well-understood characteristic of the Divine Being, that he was holy and pure, and that he could not have any pleasure in furthering the designs of wicked men. This is said with reference to his enemies, who were thus wicked; and the idea is that God would not, and could not, consistently with his nature, further their designs. This is the ground of encouragement which he had to pray—that he was conscious that his own aims were right, and that his cause was just, and that God could not favour the cause of the ungodly. This is still, and always will be, a ground of encouragement in prayer. If we know that our cause is right, we may look to God to favour it; if a cause is wrong, we cannot look to him to interpose to advance it. Good men, therefore, pray; wicked men do not. ¶ *Neither shall evil dwell with thee.* The same idea is here expressed in another form. If God should show favour to the wicked, it would seem as if he admitted them to his habitation, as we do our friends and those in whom we delight. But as God would not do this, the psalmist feels that it was proper for him to call upon Him to deliver him from wicked men.

5. *The foolish.* Referring still to his enemies, as having this character, and urging the fact that they *had* such a character as a reason why God should hear him, and deliver him. The word *foolish* here, הוֹלְלִים *hole-lim*, is used to denote the wicked, under the common idea in the Scriptures that sin is folly. Comp. Ps. xiv. 1. It is rendered by Professor Alexander, *the proud* or *insolent.* The Chaldee renders it *deriders;* Lat. Vulg. *unjust;* Sept. *transgressors;* Gesenius, *Lex., proud.* So De Wette. The common idea, however, is the correct one, referring to the wicked under the idea that they were *fools,* as all sin is supreme folly. ¶ *Shall not stand in thy sight.* Shall not be allowed to be in thy presence; that is, thou wilt not approve their cause, or favour them. See Notes on Ps. i. 5. ¶ *Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* All that do wrong. He refers here, also, to a general characteristic of God, but still with an implied and immediate reference to his enemies as sustaining this character, and as a reason why he appealed to God to defend his cause. Nothing is more constantly affirmed in the Scriptures than that God hates all forms of evil.

6. *Thou shalt destroy.* Thou wilt bring to ruin; thou wilt cause to perish; that is, cause to perish as the wicked are caused to perish, by being punished. The idea is that God could not approve their cause; could not favour them; could not give them prosperity, and that they must be overthrown and punished. As in the previous verses, so here, David refers to this as a general characteristic of God, but with an implied reference to his enemies. ¶ *Them that speak leasing.* Lies; the word *leasing* being the old Saxon word to denote falsehood. See Ps. iv. 2. It is not found elsewhere in our common version. The allusion here is to his enemies, and the idea is that they were false and treacherous; a description which will well apply to them on the supposition that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom. See the introduction to the psalm. ¶ *The* LORD *will abhor.* Will hate; will hold in abomination. That is, he will show his abhorrence by punishing such as are here referred to. ¶ *The bloody and deceitful man.* The

speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the [1] bloody and deceitful man.

7 But as for me, I will come

[1] *man of bloods and deceit.*

man of blood and fraud; the man who sheds blood, and is guilty of treachery and fraud. Marg., *man of bloods and deceit.* The "man of *bloods*,"—"the plural form being commonly used where there is reference to blood-guiltiness or murder."—*Prof. Alexander.* See Gen. iv. 10; Ps. li. 14. The idea seems to be that of shedding *much* blood. The reference here, as before, is to a general characteristic of the Divine mind, with a special reference to the character of David's enemies, as being distinguished for fraud and blood-guiltiness. On the supposition (see introduction) that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom, there can be no difficulty in seeing the propriety of the application. It was on these grounds that the psalmist directed his prayer to God. He was confident that his was a righteous cause; he was as sure that his enemies were engaged in a wicked cause; and he felt, therefore, that *he* might go before God and seek his interposition, with the assurance that all his attributes, as a righteous and holy God, would be enlisted in his favour. God has *no* attribute which can take part with a sinner, or on which a sinner can rely; the righteous can appeal to *every* attribute in the Divine nature as a ground of confidence and hope.

7. *But as for me.* While it is their characteristic that they are wicked, and have no desire to serve God; and while with such characteristics they can have no hope of access to God, and no reason to suppose that he will hear their cry, I am inclined to enter his house, and I feel the assurance that he will listen to my prayer. In character and in feelings he was wholly unlike them. ¶ *I will come* into *thy house.* Indicating his expectation and his hope that he would yet be permitted to enter the courts of

into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; *and* in thy fear will I worship toward [2] thy holy temple.

[2] *the temple of thy holiness.*

the Lord, from which he was now driven away (see the introduction to the psalm), and his purpose thus to acknowledge God. The word *house* here refers to the tabernacle, which was regarded as the house or dwelling place of God. The word was applied to the entire structure, embracing all the courts, as being sacred to God, as the word was subsequently to the whole of the temple. It was the Holy of Holies, however, which was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God, and that none were permitted to enter but the high priest, and he but once in the year. (See Notes on Heb. ix. 1–7.) ¶ *In the multitude of thy mercy.* In thine abundant mercy. He expected to be delivered from his present troubles, and he felt assured that God would permit him again to enter his earthly courts, and to offer his vows and thanksgivings there. ¶ And *in thy fear.* In profound reverence for thee. Fear, or reverence, is often employed to denote devotion or worship. ¶ *Will I worship toward thy holy temple.* The worshippers were not permitted to enter the temple, but worshipped *towards* it; that is, looking towards it, or prostrating themselves towards it as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. If they were in the courts around the temple, they worshipped with their faces towards the place where God was supposed to reside; if they were far away, even in distant lands, they still directed their faces towards Jerusalem and the temple, as the Mohammedans now do towards Mecca. See Notes on Dan. vi. 10. It has been objected, from the use of the word *temple* here, that this psalm could not have been written by David, as the temple was not built until the time of Solomon. But in reply to this it may be observed that the word here used—הֵיכָל, *haikal*—

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of [1] mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

9 For *there is* no [2] faithfulness in [3] their mouth; their inward part *is* [4] very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

[1] *those which observe me*, Psa. xxvii. 11.

[2] Or, *steadfastness.* [3] *his*, i.e., *in the mouth of any of them.* [4] *wickednesses.*

is a word of large signification, and might be applied to any place of worship. It means, properly, a large and magnificent building, a palace, Prov. xxx. 28; Isa. xxxix. 7; Dan. i. 4; and then, the place where Jehovah was supposed to reside, or the place of his worship; and might be applied to the tabernacle as well as to the temple. In fact, it is *often* applied to the tabernacle that was in use before the building of the temple, 1 Sam. i. 9; iii. 3; 2 Sam. xxii. 7. Comp. Gesenius, *Lex.*

8. *Lead me, O* LORD, *in thy righteousness.* That is, conduct me safely in the manifestation of the principles of justice or righteousness which belong to thy nature. David felt assured that his was a righteous cause, and that he might make his appeal to God on the ground of the justness of that cause. Such a ground of appeal is always proper when we are in danger or in trouble from the injustice of others, for we may always ask of God to interpose, and to cause that which is right to be done. ¶ *Because of mine enemies.* On account of my enemies, or in respect to them; that is, that they may not triumph, but that I may be vindicated and may be delivered from them. ¶ *Make thy way straight before my face.* The way in which thou wouldst have me to walk. That is, mark out or make plain before me the path for me to tread—the path in which thou wilt deliver me. He was in perplexity, and knew not which way to go, and he looks up to God for guidance and direction.

9. *For* there is *no faithfulness in their mouth.* There is nothing in them which can be confided in; nothing in their promises and declarations. They are false and treacherous, and I can, therefore, only appeal to thee. It is easy to see the propriety of this statement, and of those which follow, on the supposition that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom. Absalom had gone to Hebron on a false pretence (2 Sam. xv. 7—10), and every act of his in this whole transaction had been treacherous and false. ¶ *Their inward part.* Not only their external conduct, but their hearts, their principles, their motives. This was fairly to be inferred from their conduct. The object of the psalmist is to show that they were wholly depraved in all that properly constitutes character or that entered into moral conduct. ¶ *Their throat is an open sepulchre.* That is, as the grave is open to receive its victim, so is their throat open to devour or swallow up the peace and happiness of others. The main idea is that they are false, treacherous, not to be confided in, slanderous. This passage, with the following, is employed by the apostle Paul to demonstrate the universal depravity of man. See Notes on Rom. iii. 13. ¶ *They flatter with their tongue.* He had referred to the "inward part," or the *heart*, and to the *throat* as being depraved and evil; he now refers to another member of the body as being equally depraved—the *tongue.* Instead of being employed to utter truth, and to give expression to the real feelings of the heart, it was employed to flatter others, with a view to lead them astray, or to make use of them for base and selfish purposes. The propriety of this representation as applicable to Absalom and his coadjutors no one can fail to see (comp. 2 Sam. xv. 1—6). It is also to an eminent degree the characteristic of the wicked in general. On this, also, see Notes on Rom. iii. 13.

10 [1]Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall [2]by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

11 [e]But let all those that put

[1] *Make them guilty.* [2] Or, *from their counsels.*

e Isa. lxv. 13—16.

10. *Destroy thou them, O God.* The word here rendered *destroy* is translated by Prof. Alexander "condemn"—"condemn them; literally, *make them guilty;* that is, recognise and treat them as such." The Hebrew word אָשַׁם, *asham,* means to fail in duty, to transgress, to be guilty; in Hiph., the form used here, according to Gesenius, to "punish; and hence to destroy," (*Lex.*) The idea in the mind of the psalmist seems to have been that he desired, since they were undoubtedly guilty, that God would regard and treat them *as such.* It is not that he wished that God would *make* them guilty; or that, in itself considered, he desired that they should be found to be so, or that, in itself considered, he wished them to be punished or cut off; but it is that, as they *were* guilty, and as they were pursuing a course which tended to overthrow the government of the land, and as they were at war with God and with the best interests of the people, God would interpose and stay their progress,—that he would show himself to be a righteous and just God. There is no evidence of any private malignity in this prayer, or of any spirit of private revenge. It is a prayer which corresponds with all the *efforts,* and consequently with all the *wishes* of every good man, that the violators of law may be arrested and punished. In this, assuredly, there is no wrong. ¶ *Let them fall by their own counsels.* So as to show that they brought this judgment upon themselves. The wish is, that their plans, which were evil, might come to nought, and tend to their own overthrow. That is, the psalmist did not wish to imbrue his hands in their blood, or to be made the agent in their destruction; but he desired that God would himself interpose, so that their own plans might be made the means of quelling the rebellion. If men are so wicked that they must perish, it is desirable that it should be *seen* that they perish by their own guilt and folly. ¶ *Cast them out.* Expel them; drive them away; let them not be successful in taking possession of the throne, and in overturning the government. ¶ *In the multitude of their transgressions.* In the abundance of their sins, or as a consequence of the number and the aggravation of their offences. The design of the psalmist is to fix the attention on the *great number* of their sins as a reason why they should not be successful. Such a prayer is not wrong, for it would not be right to pray that sinners *in* the abundance of their sins, or in consequence of the multitude of their sins, should be successful and prosperous. The fact that they are such sinners is, under a righteous administration, a reason why they should *not* be successful, not why they *should be.* ¶ *For they have rebelled against thee.* This is given as a reason why the psalmist prayed that they should be cut off. It was not that they had wronged *him;* it was because they had rebelled against *God;* and it was right, therefore, to hope and to pray that he would interpose and vindicate his government and law. There is no spirit of private revenge manifested here, and nothing said that would encourage or foster such a spirit. All that is *said* here is but carrying out what every magistrate must *feel* who executes the laws, and is what he endeavours himself to *do;* for it is desirable that the wicked—the violators of the law—the enemies of their country—should be arrested and prosecuted. See General Introduction, § 6.

11. *But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 12. That is, they have occasion to rejoice in thee and in thy protection.

their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou [1] defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

[1] *coverest over*, or, *protectest.*

The wicked have everything to dread, for they must be cut off; but the righteous have every reason to be happy, for they shall partake of the favour of God. This is, at the same time, the earnest expression of a desire that they *might* rejoice, and that the dealings of God with them might be such that they would ever *have occasion* for joy. ¶ *Let them even shout for joy.* Internal joy or happiness is often expressed by shouting, or singing, as the word here used frequently signifies. The meaning is, that they should give every proper expression to their feeling of joy. This may be done by singing, or by grateful ascriptions of praise and gratitude. ¶ *Because thou defendest them.* While the wicked are cut off (ver. 10). The psalmist, in this expression, doubtless had a primary reference to himself, and to those who adhered to him in his righteous cause; but, as is common in the Psalms, he gives to the sentiment a general form, that it might be useful to all who fear and love God. ¶ *Let them also that love thy name.* That love *thee*—the name being often put for the person. This is but another form of designating the righteous, for it is one of their characteristics that they love the name of God. ¶ *Be joyful in thee.* Rejoice in thee—in thine existence, thy perfections, thy government, thy law, thy dealings, thy service;—in all that thou hast revealed of thyself, and in all that thou doest. Comp. Notes on Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4. It is one of the characteristics of the truly pious that they *do* find their happiness in God. They rejoice that there *is* a God, and that he is just such a being as he is; and they take delight in contemplating his perfections, in the evidences of his favour and friendship, in communion with him, in doing his will.

12. *For thou*, LORD, *wilt bless the righteous.* It is one of the characteristics of God that, while he will punish the wicked, he will show favour to the righteous; while he brings deserved punishment upon the one, he will show his favour to the other. ¶ *With favour wilt thou compass him as* with *a shield.* That is, as a shield is thrown round or before one in the day of battle to protect him, so wilt thou throw thy protection around the righteous. For a description of a *shield*, see Notes on Eph. vi. 16. Comp. Notes on Ps. iii. 3. On these accounts, David felt that he might trust in God in the day of trouble and danger; and, on the same account, all who are righteous may put their trust in him now.

PSALM VI.

§ 1. *Title of the psalm.*—This psalm is inscribed "To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith." On the meaning of the phrase "Chief Musician on Neginoth," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. The phrase "upon Sheminith" occurs here for the first time, and modifies the meaning of the title. The word *Sheminith*—שְׁמִינִית—means properly *the eighth*, and corresponds exactly to our word *octave*, the eighth. It means in modern music an interval of seven degrees, or twelve semitones. It contains five full tones, and two semitones. It is supposed by Gesenius (*Lex.*) here to denote "the lowest and gravest notes of the scale, sung by men, the modern *bass* or *basso*." The word occurs, in the musical use, in 1 Chron. xv. 21, in enumerating various names of musicians, "Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, etc., with harps on the Sheminith to excel;" marg., "or *eighth*." It is also found in the title to Ps. xii. It does not elsewhere occur in reference to music in the Scriptures. It is probably not possible now to ascertain the precise meaning of the word as applicable to ancient music, and it is not important. The phrase "*upon the octave*" would

properly be the true rendering of it; and this was doubtless quite intelligible at the time. It would be difficult to explain many of the musical terms now in use, after the lapse of two or three thousand years. If the term, however, was used, as is supposed by Gesenius, to denote the bass, its meaning is not difficult. It would then mean that the psalm was designed to be sung, accompanied with the instruments designated by *Neginoth*, and with the voices appropriate to this *octave*—the bass voices. The usual bass voice might be supposed to be adapted to the sentiment in the psalm.

§ 2. *The author of the psalm.*—The psalm purports to have been written by David, and there is nothing in the psalm to lead us to doubt the truth of this representation. It may be assumed, therefore, to be his.

§ 3. *The occasion on which the psalm was written.*—In the running title in the English version this psalm is called "David's complaint in his sickness." It is hardly necessary to say that these running titles were prefixed by the translators, and that there is nothing in the Hebrew that corresponds with this. Still, this has been a very prevailing tradition as to the occasion on which this psalm was composed. Bishop Horsley prefixes this title to it:—"A penitential prayer in the character of a sick person," and in the exposition of this psalm supposes that the suppliant is a mystical personage, and that the object is to represent the feelings of a penitent under the image of such a personage, or that "the sick person is the believer's soul labouring under a sense of its infirmities and anxiously expecting the promised redemption; the sickness is the depravity and disorder occasioned by the fall of man." Luther entitles it "A penitential prayer (*Bussgebet*), for the health of the body and the soul." De Wette regards it as the prayer of one oppressed or in trouble, under the image of a sick person; and in this opinion Rosenmüller concurs. Others regard it as a psalm composed in view of sickness, and suppose it was written in consequence of sickness brought upon David in consequence of the rebellion of Absalom. Indeed, there has been a pretty general concurrence among expositors in the sentiment that, as the two previous psalms were composed in view of that rebellion, so this was also. Calvin supposes that it was not composed specifically in view of *sickness*, but of some great calamity that brought David to feel that he was near the borders of the grave, and that was thus the means of bringing the sins of his past life impressively to his remembrance.

In this uncertainty, and this want of positive testimony as to the occasion when the psalm was composed, it is natural to look to the psalm itself, and to inquire whether there are any *internal* indications which will enable us to determine with any degree of probability the circumstances of the writer at the time of its composition. The psalm, then, has the following internal marks as to the occasion on which it was composed:

I. The writer was in the midst of enemies, and in great peril on account of them. "Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies," ver. 7. "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," ver. 8. "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed," ver. 10. We cannot be mistaken, then, in supposing that this was at some period in the life of David, when his numerous enemies pressed hard upon him and endangered his life.

II. He was crushed and broken-hearted on account of these trials; he had not strength of body to bear up under the weight of accumulated woes; he sank under the burden of these troubles and calamities, and was brought near to the grave. There were many and formidable external foes who threatened his life; and there was, on some account, connected with this, deep and crushing *mental* anguish, and the result was actual and dangerous sickness—so that he was led to contemplate the eternal world as near to him. It became a case, therefore, of real sickness caused by peculiar outward troubles. This is manifest from such expressions as the following:—"I am weak; heal me: my bones are vexed" (ver. 2). "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (ver. 5). "I am weary with my groaning; I water my couch with my tears: mine eye is consumed with grief," vers. 6, 7. This is such language as would be used by one who was crushed and broken-hearted with grief, and who, unable to bear up under the weighty load, was laid, as the result of it, on a bed of languishing. It is not uncommon that outward troubles become too great for the feeble human frame to bear, and that, crushed beneath them, the body is laid upon a bed of languish-

PSALM VI.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon [1] Sheminith. *f* A Psalm of David.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine [g] anger, neither chasten me in thy [h] hot displeasure.

[1] Or, *the eighth.*

f 1 Chron. xv. 21; Psa. xii., *title.*
g Jer. x. 24. *h* Psa. ii. 5.

ing, and brought to the borders of the grave, or to the grave itself.

III. The psalmist expresses a feeling which is common in such cases—a deep anxiety on the subject of his own sin, as if these calamities had come upon him on account of his transgressions, and as a punishment for his sins. This is implied in ver. 1:—"O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." He looked upon this as a *rebuke* from God, and construed it as an expression of *hot displeasure.* This is the prompting of natural feeling when one is afflicted, for this inquiry spontaneously arises in the mind, whether the affliction is not on account of some sin which we have committed, and is not to be regarded as proof that God is angry with us. It is an inquiry as proper as it is natural, and David, in the circumstances referred to, seems to have felt its full force.

Taking all these considerations into view, it seems probable that the psalm was composed during the troubles brought upon David in the rebellion of Absalom, and when, crushed by the weight of these sorrows, his strength gave way, and he was laid on a bed of languishing, and brought near to the grave.

§ 4. *The contents of the psalm.*—The psalm contains the following points:—

I. A plea of the author for mercy and compassion in trouble, under the apprehension that God was rebuking and punishing him for his sins, vers. 1, 2. His deep sufferings, described in the following verses, had, as remarked above, led him to inquire whether it was not on account of his sins that he was afflicted, and whether he ought not to regard his sorrow as proof that God was displeased with him for his sins.

II. A description of his sufferings, vers. 2—7. He had been crushed with sorrow, and had become "weak;" his very "bones" were "vexed;" he was drawing near to the grave; he was weary with his groaning; he watered his couch with his tears; his eye was consumed with grief. These sufferings were partly bodily and partly mental; or rather, as suggested above, probably his mental sorrows had been so great as to prostrate his physical frame, and to lay him on a bed of languishing.

III. The assurance that God had heard his prayer, and that he would triumph over all his enemies, and that all his troubles would pass away, vers. 8—10. Hope breaks in suddenly upon his afflicted soul, and, under this exulting feeling, he addresses his enemies, and tells them to depart from him. They could not be successful, for the Lord had heard his prayer. This sudden answer to prayer—this happy turn of thought—often occurs in the Psalms, as if, while the psalmist was pleading, an immediate answer to prayer was granted, and light broke in upon the darkened mind.

1. *O* LORD, *rebuke me not in thine anger.* As if God was rebuking him by the affliction which he was bringing upon him. This is the point on which the attention of the psalmist is now fixed. He had been apparently contemplating his afflictions, and inquiring into their cause, and he was led to the conclusion that it *might* be for his sins, and that his trials were to be interpreted as proof that God was angry with him. He speaks, therefore, of God as visiting him in his *anger*, and in his *hot displeasure*, and pleads with him that he would *not* thus rebuke and chasten him. The word *rebuke* here, like the word rendered *chasten*, properly refers to the reproof of an offender *by words*, but may also be used to denote the reproof which God administers by his providential dealings when he brings judgment upon any one for his sins. This is the meaning here. The psalmist did not apprehend that God would openly *reprove* him for his sins; but he regarded his dealings with him as such a reproof, and he pleads that the tokens of the reproof might be taken away. The whole language is that which indicates a connection between suffering and sin; the feeling

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones [i] are vexed.

3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

[i] Psa. li. 8.

which we have when we are afflicted that it must be on account of our sins. ¶ *Neither chasten me.* A word denoting substantially the same thing; used here in the sense of *punishing.* ¶ *In thy hot displeasure.* Literally, *in thy heat.* We speak of anger or wrath as *burning*, or *consuming.* Comp. Gen. xxxix. 19; Num. xi. 33; Deut. xi. 17; Ps. cvi. 40; Job xix. 11; xxxii. 2, 3; Ps. ii. 12.

2. *Have mercy upon me, O* LORD. That is, be gracious to me; or, show me compassion. This language may be used either in view of sin, of suffering, or of danger. It is a cry to God to interpose, and remove some present source of trouble, and may be employed by one who feels that he is a sinner, or by one on a bed of pain, or by one surrounded by enemies, or by one at the point of death, or by one who is looking out with apprehension upon the eternal world. It is commonly, indeed (comp. Ps. li. 1), a cry to God in view of sin, pleading for pardon and salvation; but here it is a cry in view of trouble and danger, outward sorrow and mental anguish, that had overcome the strength of the sufferer and laid him on a bed of languishing. See introduction to the psalm, § 3. ¶ *For I* am *weak.* The original word here, אֻמְלַל, *umlal,* means properly to languish or droop, as plants do that are blighted, Isa. xxiv. 7, or as fields do in a drought, Isa. xvi. 8, and is here applied to a sick person whose strength is withered and gone. The condition of such an one is beautifully compared with a plant that withers for lack of moisture; and the word is used in this sense here, as referring to the psalmist himself when sick, as the result of his outward and mental sorrows. Such an effect has not been uncommon in the world. There have been numberless cases where sorrow has prostrated the strength—as a plant withers,—and has brought on languishing sickness. ¶ *O* LORD, *heal me.* This is language which would be properly applied to a case of sickness, and therefore it is most natural to interpret it in this sense in this place. Comp. Isa. xix. 22; xxx. 26; Job v. 18; Gen. xx. 17; Ps. lx. 2; 2 Chron. xvi. 12; Deut. xxviii. 27. ¶ *For my bones are vexed.* The word *vexed* we now commonly apply to mental trouble, and especially the lighter sort of mental trouble,—to irritate, to make angry by little provocations, to harass. It is used here, however, as is common in the Scriptures, in reference to torment or to anguish. The bones are the strength and framework of the body, and the psalmist means here to say that the very source of his strength was gone; that that which supported him was prostrated; that his disease and sorrow had penetrated the most firm parts of his body. Language is often used in the Scriptures, also, as if the *bones* actually suffered pain, though it is now known that the bones, as such, are incapable of pain. And in the same manner, also, language is often used, though that use of the word is not found in the Scriptures, as if the *marrow* of the bones were peculiarly sensitive, like a nerve, in accordance with what is the common and popular belief, though it is now known that the marrow of the bones is entirely insensible to suffering. The design of the psalmist here is to say that he was crushed and afflicted in every part of his frame.

3. *My soul is also sore vexed.* The word *soul* here is used in the sense in which it is commonly with us, as denoting the mind. The idea is, that his sorrows were not merely those of the bodily frame. They had a deeper seat than even the bones. His mind, his soul, was full of anguish also, in view of the circumstances which surrounded him, and which had brought

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' [k] sake.

k Eph. ii. 7, 8.

5 [l] For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave [m] who shall give thee thanks?

l Isa. xxxviii. 18. m Psa. lxxxviii. 11.

on these bodily afflictions. ¶ *But thou, O* LORD. This is a broken sentence, as if he had commenced an address to God, but did not complete it. It is as if he had said, "Here I suffer and languish; my sorrows are deep and unmitigated; as for *thee*, O Lord"—as if he were about to say that he had hoped God would interpose; or, that his dealings were mysterious; or, that they seemed strange or severe; but he ends the sentence by no language of complaint or murmuring, but by simply asking "*how long*" these sorrows were to continue. ¶ *How long!* That is, how long wilt thou leave me thus to suffer? How long shall my unmitigated anguish continue? How long will it be ere thou wilt interpose to relieve me? The language implies that in his apprehension it *was* already a long time—as time usually seems long to a sufferer (comp. Job vii. 2—4), and that he was constantly looking out for God to interpose and help him. This is language such as all persons may be inclined to use on beds of pain and languishing. It *seems* indeed long to them now; it will, however, seem short when they look back upon it from the glories of the heavenly world. Comp. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

4. *Return, O* LORD, *deliver my soul.* As if he had departed from him, and had left him to die. The word *soul* in this place is used, as it often is, in the sense of *life*, for in the next verse he speaks of the grave to which he evidently felt he was rapidly descending. ¶ *O save me.* Save my life; save me from going down to the grave. Deliver me from these troubles and dangers. ¶ *For thy mercies' sake.* (*a*) As an act of mere mercy, for he felt that he had no claim, and could not urge it as a matter of right and justice; and (*b*) in order that God's mercy might be manifest, or because he was a merciful Being, and might, therefore, be appealed to on that ground. These are proper grounds, now, on which to make an appeal to God for his interposition in our behalf; and, indeed, these are the *only* grounds on which we can plead with him to save us.

5. *For in death.* In the state of the dead; in the grave. ¶ There is *no remembrance of thee.* They who are dead do not remember thee or think of thee. The *ground* of this appeal is, that it was regarded by the psalmist as a *desirable* thing to remember God and to praise him, and that this could not be done by one who was dead. He prayed, therefore, that God would spare his life, and restore him to health, that he might praise him in the land of the living. A sentiment similar to this occurs in Ps. xxx. 9, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" So also Ps. lxxxviii. 11, "Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?" So also in Isaiah xxxviii. 18, in the language of Hezekiah, "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." See Notes on that passage. A similar sentiment also is found in Job x. 21, 22. See Notes on that passage. In regard to the meaning of this it may be remarked (*a*) that it is to be admitted that there was among the ancient saints much less light on the subject of the future state than there is with us, and that they often, in giving utterance to their feelings, seemed to speak as if all were dark beyond the grave. (*b*) But, though they thus spoke in their sorrow and in their despondency, they also did, on other occasions, express their belief

6 I am weary with my groaning; [1] all the night [n] make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7 Mine eye is consumed be-

[1] Or, *every.* [n] Job vii. 3.

in a future state, and their expectation of happiness in a coming world (comp., for example, Ps. xvi. 10, 11; xvii. 15.) (*c*) Does not their language in times of despondency and sickness express the feelings which *we* often have now, even with all the light which we possess, and all the hopes which we cherish? Are there not times in the lives of the pious, even though they have a strong prevailing hope of heaven, when the thoughts are fixed on the grave as a dark, gloomy, repulsive prison, and *so* fixed on it as to lose sight of the world beyond? And in such moments does not *life* seem as precious to us, and as desirable, as it did to David, to Hezekiah, or to Job? ¶ *In the grave.* Heb., בִּשְׁאוֹל, *in Sheol.* For the meaning of the word, see Notes on Isa. v. 14; xiv. 9; Job vii. 9. Its meaning here does not differ materially from the word *grave.* ¶ *Who shall give thee thanks?* Who shall *praise* thee? The idea is that *none* would then praise God. It was the land of *silence.* See Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. This language implies that David *desired* to praise God, but that he could not hope to do it in the grave.

6. *I am weary with my groaning.* I am exhausted or worn out with it. That is, his sorrows were so deep, and his groaning was so constant, that his strength failed. He became *faint* under the weight of his sorrows. All persons in trouble have experienced this effect—the sense of weariness or exhaustion from sorrow. ¶ *All the night make I my bed to swim.* That is, he wept so much that his bed seemed to be immersed in tears. This is, of course, hyperbolical language, expressing in a strong and emphatic manner the depth of his sorrows. ¶ *I water my couch with my tears.* The word here rendered *water* means to melt, to flow down; then, in Hiph., to cause to flow, to dissolve. The sense here is, that he caused his couch to *flow* or *overflow* with his tears. We would say, he *flooded* his bed with tears. This verse discloses the true source of the trials referred to in the psalm. It was some deep mental anguish—some source of grief—that exhausted his strength, and that laid him on a bed of languishing. No circumstances in the life of David better accord with this than the troubles which existed on account of the ungrateful and rebellious conduct of Absalom, and it is most natural to refer it to this. Many a parent since the time of David has experienced *all,* both mental and bodily, which is here described as a consequence of the ingratitude and evil conduct of his children. The tragedy of "Lear" turns entirely on this.

7. *Mine eye is consumed.* The word here rendered *consumed*—עָשְׁשׁ, *ashash*—means properly to fall in, to fall away, and is applied here to the *eye* as pining or wasting away from care, anxiety, and sorrow. Tears were poured forth from the eye, and it seemed to be exhausting itself in this manner. The meaning is, that it had grown *dim,* or that its sight began to fail, like that of an old man, on account of his troubles. Many have understood the word here rendered *eye* as referring to the *countenance;* but it is doubtful whether the word ever has this signification; and at any rate the common signification, referring it to the *eye,* best suits this connection. ¶ *It waxeth old.* It seems to grow old; it experiences the effects commonly produced by age in blunting the power of vision. This is not an uncommon effect of grief and sadness. Even while I am writing this I am called in my pastoral visitations to attend on a young lady lying on a bed of languishing, and probably of death, one of whose symptoms is a quite diminished, and indeed almost

cause of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

8 [o] Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the LORD hath heard [p] the voice of my weeping.

9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.

o Psa. cxix. 115; cxxxix. 19.

p Psa. cxlv. 18.

total loss of vision, as the effect of trouble and disease. ¶ *Because of all mine enemies.* From the trouble which they have brought upon me. The reference here, according to the interpretation proposed of the psalm, is to Absalom and those who were associated with him. Their conduct had been such as to bring upon David this overwhelming tide of sorrows.

8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Referring, by the "workers of iniquity," to his enemies, as if they now surrounded him, and calling on them *now* to leave him, since God had heard his prayer, and they could not be successful in their purposes. This is an indirect but most emphatic way of saying that God had heard his prayer; and the sentiment in this verse is strongly in contrast with the desponding state of feeling—the deep and dreadful sorrow—indicated in the previous verses. Light broke in suddenly upon him; his prayer had come up before God, and, in some way, he was assured that it would be answered. Already he sees his enemies scattered, and his own cause triumphant; and in this exulting feeling he addresses his foes, and commands them to leave him. This is, therefore, a remarkable and striking proof that prayer may be heard, even while we are speaking to God (comp. Isa. lxv. 24); that the assurance may be conveyed suddenly to the mind that God will hear and answer the prayer which is addressed to him; and also a beautiful illustration of the *effect* of this on a mind overwhelmed with trouble and sorrow, in giving it calmness and peace. ¶ *For the* LORD *hath heard.* That is, my prayer has ascended before him, and I am certain that he regards it favourably, and will answer it. *In what way* he had this assurance he does not inform us. As he was an inspired man, we may suppose that the assurance was given to him directly by the Holy Spirit. *We* are not to expect the *same kind* of assurance that our prayers are heard; we are to look for no revelation to that effect; but there may be *as real* an intimation to the mind that our prayers are heard—as real *evidence*—as in this case. There may be a firm confidence of the mind that God is a hearer of prayer now coming to the soul with the freshness of a new conviction of that truth; and there may be, in trouble and sorrow, a sweet calmness and peace breathed through the soul—an assurance that all will be right and well, *as if* the prayer were heard, and such as there would be if we were assured by direct revelation that it *is* heard. The Spirit of God can produce this in our case as really as he did in the case of David. ¶ *The voice of my weeping.* The voice of prayer that accompanied my weeping, or the voice of the weeping itself—the cry of anguish and distress which was in itself of the nature of prayer.

9. *The* LORD *hath heard my supplication.* Repeating the sentiment in the previous verse, to express his assurance and his joy. Nothing is more natural in such circumstances than to dwell on the joyous thought, and to repeat it to ourselves, that it may make its full impression. ¶ *The* LORD *will receive my prayer.* As he has done it, so he will still do it. This allays all fears of the future, and makes the mind calm. The state of mind here is this:—"The Lord *has* heard my prayer; I am assured that he *will* do it hereafter; I have, therefore, nothing to fear."

10. *Let all mine enemies be ashamed.* Be so brought to see their folly that

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

they shall be ashamed of their conduct. The wish is that they might be brought to see their own guilt—a wish certainly which it is right to cherish in regard to all evil-doers. ¶ *And sore vexed.* Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 10. The same Hebrew word is used here which occurs in vers. 2, 3, and rendered *vexed.* It is a word which denotes trouble, trembling, consternation; and the meaning here is, that the psalmist prayed that they might be confounded or disconcerted in their plans—a prayer which is certainly proper in regard to all the purposes of the wicked. No one should desire that the purposes of the wicked should prosper; and *not* to desire this is to desire that they may be foiled and overcome in their schemes. This must be the wish of every good man. ¶ *Let them return.* Turn back, or be turned back; that is, let them be repulsed, and compelled to turn back from their present object. ¶ And *be ashamed suddenly.* Heb., "In a moment;" instantaneously. He desired that there might be no delay, but that their discomfiture might be accomplished at once. As it was right to pray that this might occur, so it was right to pray that it might occur without delay, or as speedily as possible. The sooner the plans of sinners are confounded, the better.

PSALM VII.

§ 1. *Author of the psalm.*—This psalm, according to the title, was composed by David; and there is nothing in it that is contrary to this supposition. Indeed, there were many circumstances in the life of David which would suggest the thoughts in this psalm; and the sentiments expressed are such as are frequently found in his other compositions.

§ 2. *Occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—The psalm is said in the title to have been composed as "a song to the Lord, concerning the words (Marg., 'or business,') of Cush the Benjamite." There is no reason to call the correctness of this title in question, but there have been very various opinions as to who this Cush was. It is manifest from the psalm that it was composed in view of some "words" of reviling, or reproach, or slander; something that was done to wound the feelings, or to injure the reputation, or destroy the peace of David.

There have been three opinions in regard to the *Cush* here referred to. (1.) According to the first, *Saul* is the person intended; and it has been supposed that the name *Cush* is given to him as a reproach, and to denote the blackness of his character, as the word *Cush* would denote an Ethiopian, or black man. So it was understood by the author of the Targum or Chaldee Paraphrase, in which it is rendered "an ode which David sang before the Lord on the death of Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin." But this opinion has no probability. It is not certain that this term *Cush* would, in the time of David, denote one of black complexion; nor is there any probability that it would be used as a term of reproach at all; and as little probability is there that it would be applied by David to Saul if it had been. If the psalm referred to Saul, it is probable, from all that we know of the feelings of David towards the reigning prince, that he would not designate him, in the title of a psalm, in enigmatical and reproachful language. Besides, the injurious treatment of Saul towards David was rather manifested in *deeds* than in *words.* (2.) A second opinion is, that it refers to Shimei, who was of the house of Saul, and who reproached and cursed David as he was flying from Jerusalem on occasion of the rebellion of Absalom, 2 Sam. xvi. 5, seq. It is supposed by those who maintain this opinion that the name was given to him because he was a calumniator and reviler—or, as we would say, a *blackhearted* man. But the same objection exists to this opinion as to that before-mentioned; and besides this, there are several things in the psalm which do not agree with such a supposition. In fact there is no reason for such a supposition, except that Shimei was a calumniator, and that the psalm refers to some such person. (3.) A third opinion is, that it refers to some one of the *name* Cush, of the tribe of Benjamin, who reproached David on some occasion that is now unknown.

This opinion has every degree of probability, and is undoubtedly the correct opinion. David was often reproached and calumniated in his life, and it would seem that, on some occasion now to us unknown, when he was violently reproached in this manner, he gave vent to his feelings in this impassioned ode. No other record was made of the transaction, and the occasion on which it occurred is not known. At the time when it occurred it would be easily understood who was referred to, and the design of the composition was accomplished by the record of the feelings of the author on an occasion that greatly tried his spirit. It is thus of permanent value to the church and the world, for there are few persons that are not on some occasions bitterly reproached, and few who are not disposed to vent their feelings in expressions similar to those in this psalm. One great design of the collection of poems in the Psalms was to show the workings of human nature in a great variety of situations; and hence such a psalm as this has a permanent and general value; and so far as this general use is concerned, it matters little on what occasion, or in reference to what individual, the psalm was composed.

§ 3. *Contents of the psalm.*—The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. A prayer of the psalmist for deliverance from his enemies, and especially from this particular foe that threatened his destruction, vers. 1, 2. This is the general subject of the psalm.

II. He offers this prayer on the ground that he is innocent of the charges that are brought against him;—relying thus on the fact that his was a righteous cause, and appealing to God on this ground, and declaring his willingness to suffer all that his enemy attempted to bring upon him if he was guilty, vers. 3—5.

III. He prays for the interposition of Divine justice on his enemies, on the ground of the general justice of God, and as a part of his general administration over men, vers. 6—9.

IV. In his own hopes, he trusts in the Divine discrimination between innocence and guilt, assured that God would interpose on behalf of the righteous, and that the principles of the Divine administration were opposed to the wicked, vers. 10, 11.

V. He speaks confidently of the ultimate destruction of the ungodly and of the manner in which it would be brought about, vers. 12—16. If they did not turn, they must be certainly destroyed, for God was preparing the instruments of their destruction; and the *means* which he would use would be the very plans of the wicked themselves.

VI. The psalmist says that, as for himself, he would praise the Lord according to his righteousness; that is, would adore and praise him as a righteous God, ver. 17.

The general *subject* of the psalm, therefore, pertains to the feelings which are to be entertained towards revilers and calumniators—towards those who reproach us when we are conscious of innocence of the charges that are alleged against us; and as all good men are liable to be placed in these circumstances, the psalm has a practical and general value.

§ 4. *The title to the psalm.*—The psalm is entitled "*Shiggaion of David.*" The word *Shiggaion*—שִׁגָּיוֹן—occurs only in this place in the singular number, and in Hab. iii. 1 in the plural. "A prayer of Habakkuk upon *Shigionoth.*" It properly means a *song*, *psalm*, *hymn* (Gesenius). Prof. Alexander renders it "wandering, error," as if the word were derived from שָׁגָה, *shagah*, to walk, to go astray; and he supposes that it refers to the fact that David was *wandering* or unsettled at the time when the psalm was composed. This reason, however, will not apply to the use of the word in Habakkuk. Solomon Van Til. (Ugolin, Thesau. Sac. Ant., vol. xxxii. pp. 294, 295), supposes that it refers to "a certain inadvertence or oblivion of himself on the part of the author, or powerful seizure of the mind,"—*animi abreptio.* He says that it is commonly supposed to indicate a poem, in which the poet is impelled by his feelings, and drawn along with little regard to the regularity of the numbers or the metre, but in which he pours out his emotions in an erratic or irregular manner from the overflowing of his soul. This seems to me to have been the probable origin of this title, and to have denoted the kind of poetry to which it was applicable. Julius Bartoloccius (Ugolin, xxxii. 484) supposes that it refers to a certain *tone* (the "fifth tone") as peculiarly *sweet* and *soft*, and that this kind of poetry was thus applicable to hymns of joy; and that the term is used here because this psalm is peculiarly sweet and pleasant. There is nothing in

PSALM VII.

Shiggaion *q* of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning [1] the words of *r* Cush the Benjamite.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me;

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* [2] none to deliver.

q Hab. iii. 1. [1] Or, *business.*

r 2 Sam. xvi. [2] *not a deliverer.*

the psalm, however, which would indicate that this is the origin of the title; and the former supposition better meets the case than either this or the opinion of Professor Alexander. I would regard it, therefore, as applicable to a psalm where there was an overflow of feeling or emotion that poured itself out without much regard to regular rhythm, or the laws of metre. It is a psalm of a *wandering* or *irregular metre.* It may not be easy, however, to determine why it is particularly applied to this psalm; it is more easy to see why it should be applied to the hymn in Habakkuk. The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint render it simply *A psalm.*

1. *O* LORD *my God, in thee do I put my trust.* The psalm opens with an expression of strong confidence in God. The psalmist addresses Jehovah as *his* God, and says that in him he trusts or confides. The word rendered *trust*—חָסָה, *hhasa*—means *to flee;* to flee to a place; to take shelter; and is applied to taking shelter under the shadow or protection of one (Judg. ix. 15; Isa. xxx. 2; Ps. lvii. 1; lxi. 4). The idea here is, that in his troubles he fled to God as a refuge, and felt safe under his protection. ¶ *Save me from all them that persecute me.* That is, protect my life; rescue me from their power. The word *persecute* here refers to those who sought his life, who endeavoured to deprive him of his rights. The *language* would apply to many occasions in the life of David—to the persecutions which he endured by Saul, by Absalom, etc. In this case the language was suggested by the opposition of Cush the Benjamite; and it was this that David had particularly in view. It is probable, however, that, whoever Cush was, he was not alone, but that others were associated with him in his opposition to David; and it was natural also that, in circumstances like these, David should remember his *other* persecutors, and pray that he might be delivered from them all. The prayer, therefore, has a general form, and the desire expressed is that which we all naturally have, that we may be delivered from *all* that troubles us. ¶ *And deliver me.* Rescue me. It would seem from this expression, and from the following verse, that there was more to be apprehended in the case than mere reproachful *words,* and that his life was actually in danger.

2. *Lest he.* Lest *Cush* should do this. See the title, and the introd. to the psalm, § 2. ¶ *Tear my soul like a lion.* Tear or rend my *life*—that is, *me*—like a lion. The word rendered *soul* here—נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*—refers, as it properly does elsewhere, to the *life,* and not to the soul, as we use the term, denoting the thinking, immortal part. The simple idea is, that David was apprehensive of his *life,* and, in order to indicate his great peril, he uses language derived from the fierceness of the lion. Such imagery would be well understood in a country where lions abounded, and nothing could more strikingly denote the danger in which David was, or the fierceness of the wrath of the enemy that he dreaded. ¶ *Rending* it *in pieces.* Rending *me* in pieces. Or rather, perhaps, breaking or crushing the bones; for the word used—פָּרַק—*parak* (whence our English word *break*)—means *to break, to crush,* and would apply to the act of the lion crushing or breaking the bones of his victim as he devoured it. ¶ *While* there is *none to deliver.* Denoting the complete destruction which he feared would come upon him. The figure is that of a solitary man seized

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;)

by a powerful lion, with no one at hand to rescue him. So David felt that if God did not interfere, he would fall into the hands of this fierce and wrathful enemy.

3. *O* LORD *my God.* A solemn appeal to God as to the sincerity and truth of what he was about to say. ¶ *If I have done this.* This thing charged upon me; for it is evident that *Cush,* whoever he was, had accused him of some wrong thing—some wicked action. What that was can only be learned from what follows, and even this is not very specific. So far as appears, however, it would seem to be that he accused David of bringing evil, in some way, upon one who was at peace with him; that is, of wantonly and without provocation doing him wrong, and of so doing wrong that he had the avails of it in his own possession—some spoil, or plunder, or property, that he had taken from him. The charge would seem to be, that he had made a wanton and unprovoked attack on one who had not injured him, and that he had taken, and had still in his possession, something of value that properly belonged to another. Whether the accuser (*Cush*) in this referred to himself or to some other person, does not appear clear from the psalm; but as he was filled with rage, and as the life of David was endangered by him, it would seem most probable that the reference was to himself, and that he felt *he* had been personally wronged. The design of David, in the passage now before us, is to deny this charge altogether. This he does in the most explicit manner, by saying that this was so far from being true, that he had, on the contrary, delivered the life of him that was his enemy, and by adding that, if this were so, he would be willing that the injured man *should* persecute and oppose him, and even trample his life down to the earth. ¶ *If there be iniquity in my hands.* That is, if there is the iniquity referred to; or, in other words, if he had in his possession what had been wrongfully taken from another, to wit, as appears, from this *Cush* who now accused him. The word *iniquity* here denotes an *unjust possession*—a property that had been unjustly taken from another; and, as remarked above, the slanderous charge would seem to have been, that he had taken that property from some one who was at peace with him, and that he retained it contrary to justice. This charge David means peremptorily to deny.

4. *If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me.* If I have done evil; or if I have requited him that was friendly by some unjust and evil conduct. If I have come upon him wantonly and unprovoked, and have done him wrong. This seems to have been the substance of the accusation; and, as remarked above, it is most probable that the accuser (*Cush*) referred to himself. ¶ *Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.* So far is this from being true, that the very reverse is true. So far from taking advantage of another that was at peace with me, and depriving him of his just rights by fraud or force, it is a fact that I have rescued from impending danger the man that was at war with me, and that was an avowed enemy. It would seem probable that in this he refers to this very Cush, and means to say that there had been some occasion in which he, who was long hostile to him, was wholly in his power, and when he had not only declined to take advantage of him, but had actually interposed to rescue him from danger. An instance of this kind actually occurred in the life of David, in his

5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it*; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger: [s] lift up thyself, because

[s] Psa. xciv. 1, 2.

treatment of Saul (1 Sam. xxiv. 10, 11); and it is *possible* that David referred to that case, and meant to say that *that* was an indication of his character, and of his manner of treating others. Those who suppose that the whole psalm refers to Saul (see the introduct., § 2), of course regard this as the specific case referred to. There may have been other instances of the same kind in the life of David, and there is no improbability in supposing that on some occasion he had treated this very man, *Cush*, in this way, and that he refers here to that fact.

5. *Let the enemy persecute my soul.* Persecute my *life*, for so the word rendered *soul*, נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*, is evidently used here. He was willing, if he had been guilty of the thing charged upon him, that the enemy here referred to should *pursue* or persecute him until he should destroy his life. Compare with this the expression of Paul in Acts xxv. 11. The meaning here is simply that if he were a guilty man, in the manner charged on him, he would be willing to be treated accordingly. He did not wish to screen himself from any just treatment; and if he had been guilty he would not complain even if he were cut off from the land of the living. ¶ *And take* it. Take my life; put me to death. ¶ *Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth.* The allusion here is to the manner in which the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men into the dust. The idea of David is, that if he was guilty he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn. ¶ *And lay mine honour in the dust.* All the tokens or marks of my honour or distinction in life. That is, I am willing to be utterly degraded and humbled, if I have been guilty of this conduct towards him who is my enemy. The idea in all this is, that David did not wish to screen himself from the treatment which he deserved if he had done wrong. His own principles were such that he would have felt that the treatment here referred to would have been right and proper as a recompense for such base conduct; and he would not have had a word to say against it. His desire for the interposition of God, therefore, arose solely from the fact of his feeling that, in these respects, he was entirely innocent, and that the conduct of his enemy was unjust and cruel. ¶ *Selah.* A musical pause, not affecting the sense, but introduced here, perhaps, because the sense of the psalm now demanded a change in the style of the music. See Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

6. *Arise, O* LORD, *in thine anger.* That is, to punish him who thus unjustly persecutes me. See Notes on Psalm iii. 7. ¶ *Lift up thyself.* As if he had been lying in repose and inaction. The idea is derived from a warrior who is called on to go forth and meet an enemy. ¶ *Because of the rage of mine enemies.* Not only of this particular enemy, but of those who were associated with him, and perhaps of all his foes. David felt, on this occasion, that he was surrounded by enemies; and he calls on God to interfere and save him. ¶ *And awake for me.* Or, in my behalf. The word *awake* is a still stronger expression than those which he had before used. It implies that one had been asleep, and insensible to what had occurred, and he addresses God *as if* He had thus been insensible to the dangers which surrounded him. ¶ *To the judgment* that *thou hast commanded.* To execute the judgment which thou

of the rage of mine enemies; and awake *t* for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, ac-

t Psa. xliv. 23; lxxiii. 20; Isa. li. 9.

hast appointed or ordered. That is, God had, in his law, commanded that justice should be done, and had proclaimed himself a God of justice—requiring that right should be done on the earth, and declaring himself in all cases the friend of right. David now appeals to him, and calls on him to manifest himself in that character, as executing in this case the justice which he required under the great principles of his administration. He had commanded justice to be done in all cases. He had required that the wicked should be punished. He had ordered magistrates to execute justice. In accordance with these great principles, David now calls on God to manifest *himself* as the friend of justice, and to show, in this case, the same principles, and the same regard to justice which he required in others. It is an earnest petition that he would vindicate his own principles of administration.

7. *So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about.* That is, as the result of thy gracious interposition in defending the righteous, and in bringing just judgment on the wicked. The meaning is, that such an act would inspire confidence in him as a just and holy God, and that, as the result, his people would gather round him to express their gratitude, and to render him praise. In other words, every act of justice on the part of God—all his interpositions to defend his people, and to maintain the principles of righteousness and truth—tend to inspire confidence in him, and to increase the number of his friends. The phrase "the congregation of the people," here, does not necessarily refer to any "congregation," or assembly as such, then existing; but it means that a great congregation—a great multitude—*would* thus encompass him, or that great numbers *would* worship him as the result of his interposition. This the psalmist urges as a motive, or as a reason why God should interpose, that in this way the number of his worshippers would be greatly increased. ¶ *For their sakes.* On their account; or to secure this result in regard to them. ¶ *Return thou on high.* The most probable meaning of this is "ascend thy throne of justice, or thy judgment-seat;" spoken here either as a king ascending his elevated throne (compare Isa. vi. 1), or as ascending to heaven, the place where he dispensed justice. The *language* is *as if* he had come down from his throne—*as if* he had not been engaged in dispensing justice; and David now calls on him to reascend the throne, and to execute righteous judgment among men. The effect of this, he says, would be to secure the confidence of his people, and to increase the number of those who would worship him. Of course, this is not to be understood literally, but in a manner appropriate to the Divine majesty. It is language, in this respect, similar to that which is elsewhere used, when the psalmist calls on God *to awake, to arise, to lift up himself.* See ver. 6. Such language is easily understood; and language drawn from the common modes of speaking among men must be used when we speak of God. The whole idea in this passage is that God seemed to delay in the execution of his judgment, and the psalmist entreats him to hasten it.

8. *The* LORD *shall judge the people.* Expressing his confident belief that God *would* interpose, and that his judgment would not much longer be delayed. The proposition is a general one—that God would see that justice would be done to all people; and on

cording [u] to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that is* in me.

[u] Psa. xviii. 20.

9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts [v] and reins.

[v] Rev. ii. 23.

this ground the psalmist pleads that He would now interpose and defend *him* from *his* enemies. ¶ *Judge me, O* LORD. That is, in my present circumstances. Interpose to do justice to my cause, and to vindicate me from these false accusations. ¶ *According to my righteousness.* In this particular case, for to that the proper laws of interpretation require us to confine this. He does not say that he wished his own righteousness to be made the basis of judgment in determining his eternal welfare, or that he depended on his own righteousness for salvation —for that is not the point in question; but he felt that his was, in this case, a righteous cause; that he was not guilty of the charge alleged against him; that he was an injured, wronged, and calumniated man; and he prayed that God would *vindicate* him from these charges, and defend him from those who were unjustly persecuting him. With all our sense of personal unworthiness in the matter of salvation, it is not improper, when we are wronged, to pray that God would interpose and vindicate us in that particular case, according to our innocence of the charges alleged against us. ¶ *And according to mine integrity* that is *in me.* Heb., *my perfection.* That is, his perfection in *this* case; his entire freedom from the charges brought against him; his absolute innocence in respect to the points under consideration. A man may be conscious of *perfect* innocence in respect to a particular matter, and yet have a deep sense of his *general* unworthiness, and of the fact that he is a sinner against God. That I am innocent of a particular act charged on me does not prove that I am guiltless altogether; that I should allege that, and insist on that, and pray to God to vindicate me in that, does not prove that I depend on that for the salvation of my soul, or that I claim absolute perfection before him.

9. *Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end.* Of *all* the wicked; —wickedness not in this particular case only, but wickedness of all forms, and in all lands. The prayer here is a natural one; when a man becomes impressed with a sense of the evil of sin in one form, he wishes that the world may be delivered from it in all forms and altogether. ¶ *But establish the just.* The righteous. This stands in contrast with his desire in regard to the wicked. He prays that the righteous may be confirmed in their integrity, and that their plans may succeed. This prayer is as universal as the former, and is, in fact, a prayer that the world may come under the dominion of the principles of truth and holiness. ¶ *For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.* That is, the hearts and reins of all men. He understands the character of all men; he is intimately acquainted with all their thoughts, and purposes, and feelings. To search or try "the heart and the reins" is an expression frequently used in the Bible to denote that God is intimately acquainted with all the thoughts and feelings of men; that is, that he thoroughly understands the character of all men. The word "*heart*" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the seat of the *thoughts;* and the word "*reins*" seems to be used to denote the most secret feelings, purposes, and devices of the soul —as if lodged deep in our nature, or covered in the most hidden and concealed portions of the man. The word *reins,* with us, denotes the kidneys. In the Scriptures the word seems to be used, in a general sense, to denote the inward parts, as the seat of the affections and passions. The Hebrew word כִּלְיָה, *kilyah,* means the same as the word *reins* with us,—the kid-

10 [1] My defence [w] *is* of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

[1] *buckler* is *upon*. [w] Ps. lxxxix. 18.

11 [2] God judgeth the righteous,

[2] Or, *is a righteous judge*.

neys, Exod. xxix. 13, 22; Job xvi. 13; Isa. xxxiv. 6; Deut. xxxii. 14. From some cause, the Hebrews seem to have regarded the *reins* as the seat of the affections and passions, though perhaps only in the sense that they thus spoke of the *inward* parts, and meant to denote the deepest purposes of the soul—as if utterly concealed from the eye. These deep thoughts and feelings, so unknown to other men, are all known intimately to God, and thus the character of every man is clearly understood by him, and he can judge every man aright. The phrase here used—of trying the hearts and reins—is one that is often employed to describe the Omniscience of God. Comp. Jer. xi. 20; xvii. 10; xx. 12; Ps. xxvi. 2; cxxxix. 13; Rev. ii. 23. The particular idea here is, that as God searches the hearts of all men, and understands the secret purposes of the soul, he is able to judge aright, and to determine correctly in regard to their character, or to administer his government on the principles of exact justice. Such is the ground of the prayer in this case, that God, who knew the character of all men, would confirm those who are truly righteous, and would bring the wickedness of the ungodly to an end.

10. *My defence* is *of God*. The meaning here is, that God was his protector, and that in his troubles he confided in him. The original word here, as in Ps. iii. 3; v. 12, is *shield*. See Notes on those verses. ¶ *Which saveth the upright in heart*. Whom he that searches the heart (ver. 9) sees to be upright; or to be sincere, truthful, just. The writer says that it is a characteristic of God that he saves or protects all such; and, conscious of his innocence of the charges against himself, he here appeals to him on that ground, and confides in his protection because he sees that in this respect he was blameless.

11. *God judgeth the righteous*. That is, he pronounces a just judgment on their behalf; he vindicates their character. It is true, in a general sense, that God judges all according to their character; but the particular idea here is, that God will do justice to the righteous; he will interpose to vindicate them, and he will treat them as they ought to be treated when assailed by their enemies, and when reproached and calumniated. The original phrase here is susceptible of two translations; either, *God is a righteous judge*—or, *God is judging*, that is judges, *the righteous*. The sense is not materially varied, whichever translation is adopted. Our common version has probably expressed the true idea; and there the design of the writer is to contrast the manner in which God regards and treats the righteous, with the manner in which he regards and treats the wicked. The one he judges, that is, he does him justice; with the other he is angry every day. ¶ *And God is angry* with the wicked. The phrase *with the wicked* is supplied by our translators, but not improperly, since the writer evidently intends to speak of these in contrast with the righteous. The words *God is angry* must, of course, be understood in a manner in accordance with the Divine nature; and we are not to suppose that precisely the same passions, or the same feelings, are referred to when this language is used of God which is implied when it is used of men. It means that his nature, his laws, his government, his feelings, are all arrayed against the wicked; that he cannot regard the conduct of the wicked with favour; that he will punish them. While his judgment in regard to the righteous must be in their favour, it must just as certainly be *against* the wicked; while he will vindicate the one, he will cut off and

and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

12 [z] If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

[z] Matt. iii. 10.

punish the other. Of the truth of this in respect to the Divine character there can be no doubt. Indeed, we could not honour a God—as we could honour no other being—who would deal with the righteous and the wicked alike, or who would have no respect to *character* in the treatment of others, and in his feelings towards them. ¶ *Every day.* Continually; constantly; always. This is designed to qualify the previous expression. It is not excitement. It is not temporary passion, such as we see in men. It is not sudden emotion, soon to be succeeded by a different feeling when the passion passes off. It is the steady and uniform attribute of his unchanging nature to be always opposed to the wicked,—to all forms of sin; and in him, in this respect, there will be no change. The wicked will find him no more favourable to their character and course of life to-morrow than he is to-day; no more beyond the grave, than this side the tomb. What he is to-day he will be to-morrow and every day. Time will make no change in this respect, and the wicked can have no hope on the ground that the feeling of God towards sin and the sinner (as such) will ever be in any way different from what it is at the present moment. This is a fearful truth in regard to the sinner; and both aspects of the truth here stated should make the sinner tremble;—(*a*) that God is angry with him—that all His character, and all the principles of His government and law, are and must be arrayed against him; and (*b*) that in this respect there is to be no change; that if he continues to be wicked, as he is now, he will every day and always—this side the grave and beyond—find all the attributes of God engaged against him, and pledged to punish him. God has no attribute that can take part with sin or the sinner.

12. *If he turn not.* If the wicked person does not repent. In the previous verse the psalmist had said that God is angry with the wicked every day; he here states what must be the consequence to the wicked if they persevere in the course which they are pursuing; that is, if they do not repent. God, he says, cannot be indifferent to the course which they pursue, but he is preparing for them the instruments of punishment, and he will certainly bring destruction upon them. It is implied here that if they *would* repent and turn they would avoid this, and would be saved:—a doctrine which is everywhere stated in the Scriptures. ¶ *He will whet his sword.* He will *sharpen* his sword preparatory to inflicting punishment. That is, *God* will do this. Some, however, have supposed that this refers to the wicked person—the enemy of David—meaning that if he did not turn; if he was not arrested; if he was suffered to go on as he intended, he would whet his sword, and bend his bow, etc.; that is, that he would go on to execute his purposes against the righteous. See Rosenmüller *in loc.* But the most natural construction is to refer it to God, as meaning that if the sinner did not repent, He would inflict on him deserved punishment. The *sword* is an instrument of punishment (comp. Rom. xiii. 4); and to *whet* or *sharpen* it, is merely a phrase denoting that he would prepare to execute punishment. See Deut. xxxii. 41. ¶ *He hath bent his bow.* The bow, like the sword, was used in battle as a means of destroying an enemy. It is here used of God, who is represented as going forth to destroy or punish his foes. The language is derived from the customs of war. Comp. Ex. xv. 3; Isa. lxiii. 1—4. The Hebrew here is, "his bow he has *trodden*," alluding to the ancient mode

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows *y* against the persecutors.

y Deut. xxxii. 23; Psa. xlv. 5.

14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

15 [1] He made a pit, and digged

[1] *hath digged a pit.*

of bending the large and heavy bows used in war, by *treading* on them in order to bend them. ¶ *And made it ready.* Made it ready to shoot the arrow. That is, He is ready to execute punishment on the wicked; or, all the preparations are made for it.

13. *He hath also prepared for him.* The instruments of punishment are already prepared, and God can use them when he pleases. They are not *to be made ready*, and, therefore, there is no necessity for delay when he shall have occasion to use them. The idea is, that arrangements are made for the destruction of the wicked, and that the destruction must come upon them. The world is full of these arrangements, and it is impossible that the sinner should escape. ¶ *The instruments of death.* The means of putting them to death; that is, of punishing them. The particular means referred to here are *arrows*, as being what God has prepared for the wicked. *Death* here is designed simply to denote punishment, as death would be inflicted by arrows. ¶ *He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.* Or rather, as the Hebrew is, "He makes his arrows for burning," that is, "for burning arrows." Horsley renders it, "He putteth his arrows in action against those who are ready for burning." Prof. Alexander, "His arrows to (be) burning he will make." De Wette, "His arrows he makes burning." Lat. Vulgate and Sept., "His arrows he has made for the burning:"—that is, probably for those who are burning with rage; for persecutors. This seems to have been the idea of our translators. The Hebrew word — דָּלַק, *dalak*— —means to burn, to flame; and hence, also, to burn with love, with anxiety, or with zeal or wrath—as persecutors do. But here the word seems properly to be connected with *arrows;* and the sense is, as rendered by Gesenius, "he maketh his arrows *flaming;*" that is, burning—alluding to the ancient custom of shooting ignited darts or arrows into besieged towns or camps, for the purpose of setting them on fire, as well as for the purpose of inflicting greater personal injury. The sense is, that God had prepared the means of certain destruction for the wicked. The reference here is not necessarily to persecutors, but what is said here pertains to all the wicked unless they repent.

14. *Behold, he travaileth with iniquity.* The wicked man does. The allusion here is to the pains and throes of child-birth; and the idea is, that the wicked man labours or struggles, even with great pain, to accomplish his purposes of iniquity. All his efforts, purposes, plans, are for the promotion of evil. ¶ *And hath conceived mischief.* That is, he hath formed a scheme of mischief. The allusion here is common when speaking of forming a plan of evil. ¶ *And brought forth falsehood.* The birth is falsehood; that is, self-deception, or disappointment. It does not mean that falsehood was his aim or purpose, or that he had merely accomplished *a lie;* but the idea is, that after all his efforts and pains, after having formed his scheme, and laboured hard (as if in the pangs of childbirth) to bring it forth, it was abortive. He would be disappointed, and would fail at last. This idea is expressed more distinctly in the following verse, and the design of the whole is to say that any plan or purpose of wickedness must be in the end a failure, since God is a righteous Judge, and will vindicate his own cause.

15. *He made a pit.* The allusion here is undoubtedly to a method of

it, and is [z] fallen into the ditch *which* he made.

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness; and

[z] Esth. ix. 25; Ecc. x. 8.

hunting wild beasts which was common in ancient times. It consists in digging a pit-fall, and covering it over with brush and grass so as to deceive the animals, and then enclosing them and driving them into it. See Notes on Isa. xxiv. 17. ¶ *And digged it.* And hollowed it out so as to be large enough to contain his prey, and so deep that he could not escape if he fell into it. The idea is, that the enemy here referred to had laid a secret and artful plan to destroy others. He meant that they should not be aware of his plan until the mischief came suddenly upon them. He was preparing to ruin them, and supposed that he was certain of his prey. ¶ *And is fallen into the ditch* which *he made.* Into the pit-fall which he had constructed for others; as if a man who had made a pit-fall for wild beasts had himself fallen into it, and could not extricate himself. That is, he had been snared in his own devices; his cunning had recoiled on himself, and instead of bringing ruin on others he had only managed to bring it on himself. See this sentiment illustrated in the Notes on Job v. 13. A remarkable instance of the kind may be found in Esther (chap. v.—vii.), in the case of Haman. Indeed, such things are not uncommon in the world, where the cunning and the crafty are involved in the consequences of their own plans, and are taken in meshes from which they cannot free themselves. A straightforward course is easy, and men are safe in it; but it requires more skill than most men are endowed with to manage a crooked and crafty policy safely, or so as to be safe themselves in pursuing such a course. A spider will weave a web for flies with no danger to himself, for he is *made* for that, and acts as if he understood all the intricacies of his own web, and may move safely over it in every direction; but man was made to accomplish his purposes in an open and upright way, not by fraud and deceit; hence, when he undertakes a tortuous and crooked course—a plan of secret and scheming policy—in order to ruin others, it often becomes unmanageable by his own skill, or is suddenly sprung upon himself. No one can overvalue a straightforward course in its influence on our ultimate happiness; no one can overestimate the guilt and danger of a crooked and secret policy in devising plans of evil.

16. *His mischief.* The mischief which he had designed for others. ¶ *Shall return upon his own head.* Shall come upon himself. The blow which he aimed at others shall recoil on himself. This is but stating in another form the sentiment which had been expressed in the two previous verses. The language here used has something of a proverbial cast, and perhaps was common in the time of the writer to express this idea. ¶ *And his violent dealing.* Which he shows to others. The word rendered *violent dealing* means violence, injustice, oppression, wrong. ¶ *Shall come down upon his own pate.* The word here rendered *pate* means properly vertex, top, or crown—as of the head. The idea is that it would come upon himself. He would be treated as he had designed to treat others. The sentiment here expressed is found also in Ps. ix. 15; xxxv. 8; xxxvii. 15. Comp. Eurip. Med. 409, and Lucretius v. 1151.

17. *I will praise the* LORD *according to his righteousness.* That is, particularly as manifested in the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, protecting the one, and bringing deserved punishment upon the other.

will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

The purpose of the psalm is to show this. In the course of the psalm the author had declared his full conviction that this was the character of God, and now, in view of this, he says that he will render to him the praise and glory which such a character deserves. He will acknowledge him by public acts of praise as such a God; and will at all times ascribe these attributes to him. ¶ *And will sing praise to the name of the* LORD. To the name of JEHOVAH; that is, to Jehovah himself, the *name* being often used to designate a person, or that by which he is known; and also, in many cases, as in this, being significant, or designating the essential nature of him to whom it is applied. ¶ *Most high.* Exalted above all other beings; exalted above all worlds. The purpose here declared of praising God may refer either to the act which he was then performing in the composition of the psalm, or it may be a purpose in respect to the future, declaring his intention to be to retain in future life the memory of those characteristics of the Divine nature now disclosed to him, and to celebrate them in all time to come. The great truth taught is, that God is to be adored for what he *is*, and that his holy character, manifested alike in the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, lays the foundation for exalted praise.

PSALM VIII.

§ 1. *The author of the psalm.*—This is another psalm purporting to have been written by David, and there is nothing in it that leads us to think otherwise.

§ 2. *The title to the psalm.*—The psalm is addressed "To the chief Musician upon Gittith." In regard to the meaning of the phrase "chief Musician," see Notes on the introduction to Ps. iv. The word *Gittith*—גִּתִּית—occurs but in two other places, also in the titles to the psalms, Ps. lxxxi. 1; lxxxiv. 1. It is supposed to refer to a musical instrument so called, either as being common among the *Gittites* (from גַּתִּי, *Gittites*, or an inhabitant of Gath. See 2 Sam. vi. 10, 11; xv. 18), among whom David for some time resided; or as being derived from גַּת, *Gath*—a wine-press, as denoting an instrument that was used by those accustomed to tread the wine-vat, and intended to accompany the songs of the vintage. The former is the more probable derivation, as it is known that David dwelt for some time among that people, and it is not at all improbable that an instrument of music in use among them should have become common among the Hebrews. Nothing is known, however, as to whether it was a stringed instrument or a wind instrument. Compare, however, Ugolin, Thes. Sac. Ant. xxxii. 487. All that can be ascertained, with any degree of probability about this instrument, is, that as each of the psalms to which this title is prefixed is of a cheerful or joyous nature, it would seem that this instrument was adapted to music of this kind, rather than to that which was pensive or serious. This idea also would agree well with the supposition that it denotes an instrument that was employed by those connected with the vintage. Comp. Isa. xvi. 10.

§ 3. *Occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—Of this nothing is specified in the psalm itself, and it is impossible now to ascertain it. Aben Ezra, and some others, have supposed that it was written when David brought up the ark to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, as mentioned in 1 Chron. xiii. 12—14. But there is nothing in the psalm adapted to such an occasion. Rüdinger supposes that it was composed in the joy of taking possession of Mount Zion. Others have supposed that it was on occasion of the victory of David over Goliath of Gath; but there is nothing in it adapted to the celebration of such a victory.

If we may judge from the psalm itself, it would seem probable that it was composed by night in the contemplation of the starry heavens—naturally suggesting, in view of the vastness and beauty of the celestial luminaries, the littleness of man. This also filled the mind of the psalmist with wonder that the God who marshals all these hosts should condescend to regard the condition and wants of a being so feeble and frail as man, and should have exalted him as he has done over

PSALM VIII.

To the chief Musician upon *a* Gittith.
A Psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord, how excellent *b* *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

a Psa. lxxxi. and lxxxiv. *title.*

b Psa. cxlviii. 13.

his works. That it was composed or suggested in the night seems probable, from ver. 3, where the psalmist represents himself as surveying or "considering" the "heavens, the work" of the Divine "fingers," and as making the "moon and the stars" the subject of his contemplation, but not mentioning *the sun*. In such contemplations, when looking on the vastness and grandeur, the beauty and order, of the heavenly hosts, it was not unnatural for the writer to think of his own comparative littleness, and then the comparative littleness of *man* everywhere. No time is more favourable for suggesting such thoughts than the still night, when the stars are shining clearly in the heavens, and when the moon is moving on in the silent majesty of its course. It would seem also, from ver. 2, to be probable that the immediate occasion of this expression of admiration of the name and character of God was some act of condescension on his part in which he had bestowed signal favour on the writer—*as if* he had ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings—from even the most feeble and helpless. Perhaps it was in view of some favour bestowed on David himself; and his soul is overwhelmed with a sense of the condescension of God in noticing one so weak and feeble and helpless as he was. From the contemplation of this, the thought is naturally turned to the honour which God had everywhere bestowed upon man.

The psalm, though one part of it is applied by the apostle Paul to Christ (Heb. ii. 6, 7), does not appear originally to have had any designed reference to the Messiah, though the apostle shows that its language had a complete fulfilment in him, and in him alone. See Notes on that passage. The psalm is complete in itself, as applicable to man as he was originally created, and according to the purposes of his creation; though it is true that the original design will be carried out and completed only in the dominion which will be granted to the Messiah, who, as a man, has illustrated in the highest manner the original purpose of the creation of the race, and in whom alone the original design will be fully carried out.

§ 4. *Contents of the psalm.*—The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. An admiring recognition of the excellence of the name of God (that is, of God himself);—of that excellence as manifested in all the earth, ver. 1. The excellency referred to, as the subsequent part of the psalm shows, is in his great condescension, and in his conferring such honour on man—a being so feeble as compared with himself, and so unworthy as compared with the glory of the heavens.

II. The immediate occasion of this reflection, or the cause which suggested it, ver. 2. This seems to have been some remarkable manifestation to one who was feeble and helpless, *as if* God had ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. It is not improbable, as remarked above, that in this the psalmist refers to himself as having been, though conscious of weakness and helplessness, the means of overcoming the enemies of God, as if God had ordained strength through him, or had endowed him with strength not his own.

III. The psalmist is led into admiration of the condescension of God in bestowing such dignity and honour on man, vers. 3—8. This admiration is founded on two things:—

(1) That the God who had made the heavens, the moon and the stars, should condescend to notice man or creatures so insignificant and unworthy of notice, vers. 3, 4.

(2) The actual honour conferred on man, in the rank which God had given him in the dominion over his works here below; and in the wide extent of that dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the inhabitants of the seas, vers. 5—8.

IV. The psalm concludes with a repetition of the sentiment in the first verse—the reflection on the excellency of the Divine name and majesty, ver. 9.

1. O LORD. Heb., JEHOVAH. It is an address to God by his chosen and peculiar title, Ex. iii. 14. Compare Notes on Isa. i. 2. ¶ *Our Lord.* The word here used—אֲדֹנֵינוּ, *Adonai*—

2 Out of the mouth of [c] babes and sucklings hast thou [1] ordain-

[c] Matt. xi. 25; xxi. 16; 1 Cor. i. 27.

[1] *founded.*

means properly master, lord, ruler, owner, and is such a title as is given to an owner of land or of slaves, to kings, or to rulers, and is applied to God as being the ruler or governor of the universe. The meaning here is, that the psalmist acknowledged JEHOVAH to be the rightful *ruler, king,* or *master* of himself and of all others. He comes before him with the feeling that Jehovah is the universal ruler—the king and proprietor of all things. ¶ *How excellent* is *thy name.* How excellent or exalted art *thou*—the *name* being often used to denote the *person.* The idea is, "How glorious art thou in thy manifested excellence or character." ¶ *In all the earth.* In all parts of the world. That is, the manifestation of his perfect character was not confined to any one country, but was seen in all lands, and among all people. In every place his true character was made known through his works; in every land there were evidences of his wisdom, his greatness, his goodness, his condescension. ¶ *Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.* The word here used, and rendered "*hast set,*" is in the imperative mood—תְּנָה, *tenah—give;* and it should probably have been so rendered here, "which thy glory give thou;" that is, "which glory of thine, or implied in thy name, *give* or *place above the heavens.*" In other words, let it be exalted in the highest degree, and to the highest place, even *above* the heavens on which he was gazing, and which were in themselves so grand, ver. 3. It expresses the wish or prayer of the writer that the name or praise of God, so manifest in the earth, might be exalted in the highest possible degree—be more elevated than the moon and the stars—exalted and adored in all worlds. In His name there was such intrinsic grandeur that he desired that it might be regarded as the highest object in the universe, and might blaze forth above all worlds. On the grammatical construction of this word—תְּנָה—see an article by Prof. Stuart, in the Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. ix. pp. 73—77. Prof. Stuart supposes that the word is not formed from נָתַן, *nathan—to give,* as is the common explanation, but from תָּנָה, *tanah*—to give presents, to distribute gifts, Hos. viii. 9, 10, and that it should be rendered, *Thou who diffusest abroad thy glory over the heavens.*

2. *Out of the mouth.* This passage is quoted by the Saviour in Matt. xxi. 16, to vindicate the conduct of the children in the temple crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," against the objections of the Pharisees and Scribes, and is perhaps alluded to by him in Matt. xi. 25. It is not affirmed, however, in either place, that it had an original reference to the times of the Messiah, or that it was meant, as used by the psalmist, to denote that *children* would be employed in the praise of God. The language sufficiently expressed the idea which the Saviour meant to convey; and the *principle* or great truth involved in the psalm was applicable to the use which he made of it. The language would, perhaps, most naturally denote that infant children *would* give utterance to the praises of God, as the word *mouth* is used; but still it is not quite certain that the psalmist meant to convey that idea. It is probable, as we shall see, that he meant to say, God had conferred great honour on men—men so humble and weak that they might be compared to infants—by making them the means of overthrowing his enemies, thus showing the greatness of the Divine condescension. ¶ *Babes.* The word here used—עוֹלֵל, *olail*—means properly a boy or child, and is usually connected with the word rendered *sucklings,* Jer. xliv. 7; Lam. ii. 11. It is applied to a boy playing in the streets, Jer. vi. 11; ix. 21; asking for bread,

ed strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy [d] and the avenger.

[d] Psa. xliv. 16.

Lam. iv. 4; carried away captive, Lam. i. 5; borne in the arms, Lam. ii. 20; and once to an unborn infant, Job iii. 16. It refers here to a child, or to one who is like a child; and the idea is that those to whom it is applied were naturally unable to accomplish what was done by them, and that God had honoured them, and had shown his own condescension, by making them the instruments of doing what they had done. ¶ *And sucklings.* The word here used—יוֹנֵק, *yonaik*—means a suckling, or a sucking child, a babe, Deut. xxxii. 25. It may be used literally, or employed to denote one who, in respect to strength, may be compared with a babe. The latter is probably the use made of it here. ¶ *Hast thou ordained strength.* The word rendered *ordained*—יָסַד, *yasad* — means to found, to lay the foundation of, as of a building, Ezra iii. 12; Isa. liv. 11. Then it means to establish, appoint, ordain, constitute, etc. The meaning here is, that in what is referred to, there was, as it were, some *basis* or *foundation* for what is called "strength;" *i. e.*, that what is here meant by "strength" rested on *that* as a foundation—to wit, on what was done by babes and sucklings. The word *strength* is rendered by the Septuagint *praise*—αἶνον—and this is followed in the quotation in Matt. xxi. 16. The same rendering is adopted in the Latin Vulgate and in the Syriac. The Hebrew word — עֹז, *oz* — properly means *strength, might;* and the idea here would seem to be, that even from babes and sucklings—from those who were in themselves so feeble—God had taken occasion to accomplish a work requiring great *power*—to wit, in "stilling the enemy and the avenger;" that is, he had made those who were so feeble the instruments of accomplishing so great a work. ¶ *Because of thine enemies.* In respect to thine enemies, or in order to accomplish something in regard to them, viz., in "stilling" them, as is immediately specified. The idea is, that there were those who rose up against God, and opposed his government and plans, and that God, in overcoming them, instead of putting forth his own power directly, had condescended to employ those who were weak and feeble like little children. Who these enemies were is not specified, but it is most natural to suppose that the reference is to some of the foes of the author of the psalm, who had been subdued by the prowess of his arm,—by strength imparted to him, though in himself feeble as an infant. ¶ *That thou mightest still.* Mightest cause to *rest,* or to *cease.* The original word—שָׁבַת, *Shabath*—from which our word *Sabbath* is derived, means to rest; to lie by; to sit down; to sit still; and in Hiphil, to *cause* to rest, or to cause to desist; to put an end to, Ezek. xxxiv. 10; Josh. xxii. 25; Psa. xlvi. 9; Prov. xviii. 18. Here it means to bring to an end the purposes of the enemy and the avenger; or, to cause him to *desist* from his designs. ¶ *The enemy.* The enemy of the writer, regarded also as the enemy of God. ¶ *And the avenger.* One who was endeavouring to take revenge, or who was acting as if determined to avenge some imaginary or real wrong. This, too, may refer either to some one who was seeking to revenge himself on the author of the psalm, or who, with the spirit of revenge, stood up against God, and had set himself against him.

In regard to the meaning of this verse, which I apprehend is the *key* to the whole psalm, and which contains the original *germ* of the psalm, or the *thought* which suggested the train of reflection in it, the following remarks may be made:—(*a*) There is no evidence that it was designed to refer originally to infants, or to children of any age, as stating anything

which *they* would do in contributing to the praise of God, or as discomfiting sceptics and cavillers by "their instinctive recognition of God's being and glory," as is supposed by Calvin, De Wette, Prof. Alexander, and others. What is said here to be done by "babes and sucklings" has reference to some mighty enemy that had been overcome, not to anything which had been effected by the influence of the recognition of God by little children. It may be doubted, also, whether there *is* any such "instinctive admiration of his works, even by the youngest children," as would be "a strong defence against those who would question the being and glory" of God, as is supposed by Prof. Alexander and others; and, at all events, *that* is not the manifest thought in the passage. (*b*) Nor does it refer merely to *praise* as proceeding from children, as being that by which the effect referred to is accomplished. It is true that this idea is in the translation by the LXX., and true that it is so quoted in Matt. xxi. 16, and true, also, that, *as* quoted by the Saviour, and as originally applied, it was *adapted* to the end which the Saviour had in view—to *silence* the chief priests and Scribes, who objected to the praises and hosannas of the children in the temple; for the psalm, on any interpretation, originally meant that God would accomplish good effects by those who were feeble and weak as children, and this *principle* was applicable to the praises of the children in the temple. But it does not appear that it originally referred to *praise*, either of children or others. It was to some manifested *strength* or *prowess*, by which some enemy, or some one who was seeking revenge, was overcome by the instrumentality of those who might be compared with children on account of their feebleness. From this the psalmist takes occasion to make his reflections on the exalted honour conferred in general on a creature so weak and feeble as man, especially in the wide dominion granted him over the inferior creation. (*c*) This was, not improbably, some enemy of the author of the psalm; but *who* it was is not mentioned. David was often, however, in the course of his life, in such circumstances as are here supposed. Might it not refer to Goliath of Gath—a mighty giant, and a formidable enemy of the people of God, overcome by David, quite a stripling—a child? Would not the language of the psalm agree with that? Was it not true that he was an "enemy" and an "avenger," or one seeking revenge? and was it not true that God had, from one who was a mere child, "ordained strength" to subdue him? (*d*) God had, then, condescended to honour one who was in himself weak and feeble as a child—who had no power of himself to accomplish what had been done. (*e*) This was great condescension on the part of God; and *especially* was it to be so regarded when the eye looked out—as the author of the psalm appears to have done at the time of its composition—on the starry heavens, and contemplated their greatness and grandeur. What astonishing condescension was it that he who marshalled all those hosts should bestow such honour on man! (*f*) It was not, therefore, unnatural to reflect on the greatness of the honour which God had actually bestowed on man, and the dignity to which God had exalted him; and the psalmist is thus, from a particular act of his condescension, led into the beautiful train of reflections on the exalted dominion of man with which the psalm concludes. Thus understood, the psalm has no *original* reference to the Messiah, but still it contains the *principle* on which the apostle reasons in Heb. ii.; for the dignity of *man* is most seen in the Redeemer, and the *actual* conferring of all the dignity and honour referred to in the psalm—the *actual* and *entire* subjugation of the earth to *man*—will be found only in the universal dominion conceded to Him. At the same time, however, there is a foundation for all that the psalmist says in respect to the honour originally conferred on man, and in

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4 [c] What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

[c] Psa. cxliv. 3; Heb. ii. 6—9.

his actual dominion over the inferior creation.

3. *When I consider thy heavens.* When I contemplate or look upon. They are called *his* heavens because he made them—because he is the proprietor of them—perhaps because they are his abode. ¶ *The work of thy fingers.* Which thy fingers have made. The fingers are the instruments by which we construct a piece of work—perhaps indicating *skill* rather than *strength;* and hence so used in respect to God, as it is by his *skill* that the heavens have been made. ¶ *The moon and the stars.* Showing, as remarked above, that probably this psalm was composed at night, or that the train of thought was suggested by the contemplation of the starry worlds. It is not improbable that the thoughts occurred to the psalmist when meditating on the signal honour which God had conferred on him, a feeble man (Notes on ver. 2), and when his thoughts were at the same time directed to the goodness of God as the heavens were contemplated in their silent grandeur. ¶ *Which thou hast ordained.* Prepared, fitted up, constituted, appointed. He had fixed them in their appropriate spheres, and they now silently showed forth his glory.

4. *What is man.* What claim has one so weak, and frail, and short-lived, to be remembered by thee? What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honour? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? Why has he made so many arrangements for his comfort? Why has he done so much to save him? He is so insignificant, his life is so much like a vapour, he so soon disappears, he is so sinful and polluted, that the question may well be asked, why such honour has been conferred on him, and why such a dominion over the world has been given him. See these thoughts more fully expanded in the Notes on Heb. ii. 6. ¶ *That thou art mindful of him.* That thou dost *remember* him; that is, think of him, attend to him, —that he does not pass away wholly from thy thoughts. Why should a God who is so vast and glorious, and who has all the starry worlds, so beautiful and grand, to claim his attention —why should he turn his thoughts on *man?* And especially why should he honour him as he *has* done by giving him dominion over the works of his hands? ¶ *And the son of man.* Any descendant of man—any one of the race. What was man, as he was originally made, that such exalted honour should have been conferred on him; and what has any one of his descendants become, in virtue of his native faculties or acquired endowments, that he should be thus honoured? The design is the same as in the former part of the verse, to express the idea that there was nothing in *man,* considered in any respect, that entitled him to this exalted honour. Nothing that man has done since the time when the question was asked by the psalmist has contributed to diminish the force of the inquiry. ¶ *That thou visitest him.* As thou dost; that is, with the attention and care which thou dost bestow upon him; not forgetting him; not leaving him; not passing him by. The word here used —פָּקַד, *pakad*—would properly express a *visitation* for any purpose—for inspection; for mercy; for friendship; for judgment, etc. Here it refers to the *attention* bestowed by God on man in conferring on him such marks of favour and honour as he had done—such attention that he never seemed to forget him, but was constantly coming to him with some new proof of favour. What God has done

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou *f* hast put all *things* under his feet:

f 1 Cor. xv. 27.

for man since the psalmist wrote this, has done nothing to weaken the force of this inquiry.

5. *For thou hast made him.* Thou hast made man as such; that is, he was such in the original design of his creation, in the rank given him, and in the dominion conceded to him. The *object* here is to show the honour conferred on man, or to show how God has regarded and honoured him; and the thought is, that in his original creation, though so insignificant as compared with the vast worlds over which God presides, he had given him a rank but little inferior to that of the angels. See Notes on Heb. ii. 7. ¶ *A little lower.* The Hebrew word used here—חָסַר, *hhasar*, means to want, to lack—and then, to be in want, to be diminished. The meaning is, "Thou hast caused him *to want but little;*" that is, he was but little inferior. ¶ *Than the angels.* So this is rendered by the Chaldee Paraphrase: by the Septuagint; by the Latin Vulgate; by the Syriac and Arabic; and by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. ii. 7), who has literally quoted the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses from the Septuagint. The Hebrew, however, is—מֵאֱלֹהִים—*than God.* So Gesenius renders it, "Thou hast caused him to want but little of God; that is, thou hast made him but little lower than God." So De Wette, *nur wenig unter Gott.* So Tholuck renders it, *nur um wenig unter Gott.* This is the more *natural* construction, and this would convey an idea conformable to the course of thought in the psalm, though it has been usually supposed that the word here used—אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim* — may be applied to angels, or even men, as in Ps. lxxxii. 1; xcvii. 7; cxxxviii. 1; Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9. Gesenius (Thesau. Ling. Heb., p. 95) maintains that the word never has this signification. The authority, however, of the Chaldee, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, would seem sufficient to show that *that* meaning may be attached to the word here with propriety, and that somehow that idea was naturally suggested in the passage itself. Still, if it were not for these versions, the most natural interpretation would be that which takes the word in its usual sense, as referring to God, and as meaning that, in respect to his dominion over the earth, man had been placed in a condition comparatively but little inferior to God himself; he had made him almost equal to himself. ¶ *And hast crowned him with glory and honour.* With exalted honour. See Notes on Heb. ii. 7.

6. *Thou madest him to have dominion.* Thou didst *cause* him to have, or didst *give* him this dominion. It does not mean that God made or created him for that end, but that he had conceded to him that dominion, thus conferring on him exalted honour. The allusion is to Gen. i. 26, 28. ¶ *Over the works of thy hands.* His works upon the earth, for the dominion extends no further. ¶ *Thou hast put all* things *under his feet.* Hast placed all things in subjection to him. Compare Psa. xlvii. 3; xci. 13; Lam. iii. 34; Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 25. The language is taken from the act of treading down enemies in battle; from putting the feet on the necks of captives, etc. The idea is that of complete and entire subjection. This dominion was originally given to man at his creation, and it still remains (though not so absolute and entire as this), for nothing is in itself more remarkable than the dominion which *man*, by

7 [1]All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
8 The fowl of the air, and the

[1] *Flocks and oxen, all of them.*

fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas.

nature so feeble, exercises over the inferior creation. It is impossible to account for this in any other way than as it is accounted for in the Bible, by the supposition that it was originally conceded to man by his Creator. On the question of the applicability of this to Christ, see Notes on Heb. ii. 6—9.

7. *All sheep and oxen.* Flocks and herds. Gen. i. 26, "over the cattle." Nothing is more manifest than the control which man exercises over flocks and herds—making them subservient to his use, and obedient to his will. ¶ *And the beasts of the field.* Those not included in the general phrase "sheep and oxen." The word rendered *field*, שָׂדֶה, *sadeh*—or the poetic form, as here—שָׂדַי—*Sadai*, means properly a *plain;* a level tract of country; then, a field, or a tilled farm, Gen. xxiii. 17; xlvii. 20, 24; and then the fields, the open country, as opposed to a city, a village, a camp, Gen. xxv. 27; and hence in this place the expression means the beasts that roam at large—wild beasts, Gen. ii. 20; iii. 14. Here the allusion is to the power which man has of subduing the wild beasts; of capturing them, and making them subservient to his purposes; of preventing their increase and their depredations; and of taming them so that they shall obey his will, and become his servants. Nothing is more remarkable than this, and nothing furnishes a better illustration of Scripture than the conformity of this with the declaration (Gen. ix. 2), "And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air," etc. Comp. Notes on James iii. 7. It is to be remembered that no small number of what are now domestic animals were originally wild, and that they have been subdued and tamed by the power and skill of man. No animal has shown himself superior to this power and skill.

8. *The fowl of the air.* Gen. i. 26, "Over the fowl of the air." Gen. ix. 2, "Upon every fowl of the air." This dominion is the more remarkable because the birds of the air seem to be beyond the reach of man; and yet, equally with the beasts of the field, they are subject to his control. Man captures and destroys them; he prevents their multiplication and their ravages. Numerous as they are, and rapid as is their flight, and strong as many of them are, they have never succeeded in making man subject to them, or in disturbing the purposes of man. See Notes on James iii. 7. ¶ *And the fish of the sea.* Gen. i. 26, "Over the fish of the sea." Gen. ix. 2, "Upon all the fishes of the sea." This must be understood in a general sense, and this is perhaps still more remarkable than the dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, for the fishes that swim in the ocean seem to be placed still farther from the control of man. Yet, so far as is necessary for his use and for safety, they are, in fact, put under the control of man, and he makes them minister to his profit. Not a little of that which contributes to the support, the comfort, and the luxury of man, comes from the ocean. From the mighty whale to the shell-fish that furnished the Tyrian dye, or to that which furnishes the beautiful pearl, man has shown his power to make the dwellers in the deep subservient to his will. ¶ And whatsoever *passeth through the paths of the seas.* Everything, in general, that passes through the paths of the sea, as if the ocean was formed with *paths* or *highways* for them to pass over. Some have referred this to man, as passing over the sea and subduing its

9 O LORD, our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!

inhabitants; some, to the *fishes* before spoken of; but the most natural construction is that which is adopted in our received version, as referring to *everything* which moves in the waters. The idea is that man has a wide and universal dominion—a dominion so wide as to excite amazement, wonder, and gratitude, that it has been conceded to one so feeble as he is.

9. *O* LORD, *our Lord, how excellent,* etc. Repeating the sentiment with which the psalm opens, as now fully illustrated, or as its propriety is now seen. The intermediate thoughts are simply an illustration of this; and now we see what occupied the attention of the psalmist when, in ver. 1, he gave utterance to what seems there to be a somewhat abrupt sentiment. We now, at the close of the psalm, see clearly its beauty and truthfulness.

PSALM IX.

§ 1. *Author of the psalm.*—This psalm is ascribed to David, not only in the title, but in all the versions, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of this. It would not be difficult to show from its contents that the sentiments and style of composition are such as accord with the other compositions of David.

§ 2. *Occasion on which the psalm was composed.*—On this point nothing is intimated expressly in the psalm, unless it be in the title, "To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben." The meaning of this will be considered in another part of the introduction to the psalm (§ 4). It will be seen there that nothing is determined by that title in regard to the origin of the psalm, or the time when it was composed. Neither is there any certain tradition which will determine this, and most that has been written on this point has been mere conjecture, or has arisen out of some interpretation of the enigmatical title "*upon Muth-labben.*" Some have supposed that the word *labben* refers to some foreign king or prince slain by David, and that the psalm was composed on his death. Others, following the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase (see § 4), suppose that the person referred to was Goliath of Gath, and that it was composed on his death. Others, as Rüdinger, suppose that it is a psalm of thanksgiving on occasion of the victory over Absalom, and the suppression of his rebellion by his death: a *harsh* and *unnatural* supposition, as if *any* father, in any circumstances, could compose a psalm of praise on occasion of the death of a son. Moeller supposes that it was composed on occasion of a victory over the Philistines by David; Ferrand, who unites this psalm with the following, supposes that the whole refers to the times of the captivity in Babylon, and is a triumphal song of the people over their enemies; and Venema, who also thinks that these two psalms should be united, supposes that Ps. ix. 1-18 refers to David, and to his deliverance from all his enemies, and the remainder to the times of the Maccabees, and the deliverance from the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes. Bishop Horsley styles the psalm "Thanksgiving for the extirpation of the Atheistical faction, promised in Psalm x," and supposes that the order should be reversed, and that the whole refers to some great deliverance —either the "overthrow of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus, or the defeat of Haman's plot." The Jewish writers, Jarchi and Aben Ezra, suppose that it was composed on occasion of the defeat and death of some foreign prince. From this variety of views, none of which seem to rest on certain historical grounds, it appears probable that the exact occasion on which the psalm was composed cannot now be ascertained in such a way as to leave no ground for doubt. The only indications of the occasion on which it was written must be found, if at all, in the psalm itself. In the psalm we find the following things, which may, perhaps, be all that is necessary to enable us to understand it.

(*a*) It was composed in view of *enemies* of the writer, or *foes* with whom he had been engaged, ver. 3: "When mine *enemies* are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence." Comp. vers. 6, 13, 19, 20.

(*b*) These were *foreign* enemies, or those who are called *heathen*, that is, belonging to idolatrous nations, ver. 5: "Thou hast rebuked *the heathen*." Comp. vers. 15, 19.

(*c*) They were *desolating* foes—*invading* foes—those who laid a land waste in

their marches, ver. 6: "Thou hast destroyed cities: their memorial is perished with them."

(*d*) The writer had achieved a victory over them, and for this he celebrated the praises of God for his interposition, vers. 1, 2, 10, 11, 15. This victory thus achieved was such as to make him certain of ultimate complete triumph.

(*e*) Yet he was still surrounded by enemies, and he still asks God's merciful interposition in his behalf, ver. 13: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death." Comp. vers. 18—20.

David was not unfrequently in his life in circumstances such as are here supposed, and it is not possible now to determine the *exact* occasion to which the psalm alludes.

§ 3. *The contents of the psalm.*—The psalm embraces two leading subjects—one pertaining to the past and the other to the future, both illustrating the character of God, and both giving occasion to the writer to express his confidence in God. The one relates to deliverance already granted; the other to deliverance still hoped for in his troubles.

I. The first relates to deliverance from trouble, or conquest over foes, already granted, and to the occasion which that furnished for praising God, and for pious reflections on his character.

(1) The psalmist expresses his thanks to God, or pours out the language of praise for mercies that have been received, vers. 1, 2.

(2) The particular reason for this is stated; that God had enabled him to overcome many of his enemies,—the heathen that had risen up against him, who had now been subdued, vers. 3–6.

(3) This gives occasion for pious reflections on the character of God, as one who would endure for ever; as one who had set up his throne to do judgment or right; as one who would be a refuge for the oppressed; as one who might be confided in by all who knew him; as one who would remember the foes of the righteous, and who would not forget the cry of the humble, vers. 7-12. The principal truth taught in this part of the psalm is, that God is a refuge and help for those who are in trouble and danger; that all such may put their trust in Him; and that He will interpose to save them.

II. The second part, constructed in a manner similar to the former, relates to the future, and to what the psalmist *hoped* still from God, in view of the character which He had evinced in his former troubles, vers. 13—20.

(1) The psalmist still needs help, vers. 13, 14. He still has trouble from them that hate him, and he calls upon God still to interpose and lift him up from the gates of death, that he *may* praise him.

(2) He refers to the fact that the heathen, who surrounded him as his foes, had sunk down into the pit which they had made for others; and that their foot was taken in the net which they had hid: referring either to what *had* occurred in the past as the foundation of his present hope, or being so certain that this *would be done* that he could speak of it as if it were now actually accomplished, ver. 15.

(3) This also, as in the former case, gives occasion for pious reflections on the character of God, and on the fact that he would interpose to destroy the wicked, and to protect the righteous, vers. 16—18.

(4) In view of all this, the psalmist calls on God still to interpose—to manifest the same character which He had formerly done, by protecting him, and by overcoming his foes, vers. 19, 20. The principal truth taught in this part of the psalm is, that the wicked will be destroyed; that they, as contradistinguished from the righteous, can hope for no protection from God, but will be cut down and punished.

The condition of the author of the psalm then was, that he *had been* surrounded by foes, and that God had interposed in his behalf, giving him occasion for praise and thanksgiving; that he was still surrounded by formidable enemies, yet he felt assured that God would manifest the same character which He had done formerly, and that he might, therefore, call upon Him to interpose and give him occasion for future praise.

§ 4. *The title of the psalm.*—The psalm is directed to "*the chief Musician upon Muth-labben.*" In regard to the phrase "chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. The phrase, "*upon Muth-labben,*" occurs nowhere else, and very different explanations have been given of its meaning. The Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase, renders it "To be sung over the man that went out between the camps;" that is, Goliath of Gath; and the author of the Chaldee Paraphrase, evidently supposed it was written on the

PSALM IX.

To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben.
A Psalm of David.

I WILL praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy [g] marvellous works.

[g] Psa. cxxxix. 14.

occasion of his death. The Latin Vulgate renders it, "Pro occultis filii;" and so the Septuagint, ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων τοῦ υἱοῦ —"for the secret things (mysteries) of the Son:" but what idea was attached to those words it is impossible now to determine. The Syriac has this title: "Concerning the Messiah taking his throne and kingdom, and prostrating his foe." Luther renders it, "A Psalm of David concerning a beautiful youth"—von der schönen Jugend. Substantially so also De Wette; Nach der Jungfernweise, den Beniten. Tholuck renders it, "To the chief Musician, after the melody 'Death to the Son' (Tod dem Sohne), a Psalm of David."

After this variety in the explanation of the title, it is certainly not easy to determine the meaning. The most probable opinions may be regarded as two.

(1) That which supposes that it was a melody designed to be sung by females, or with female voices: literally, according to this interpretation, *after the manner of virgins;* that is, with the female voice *treble, soprano*, in opposition to the deeper voice of men. Comp. 1 Chron. xv. 20. Forkel, in his History of Musick (Gesch. der Musik, 1, 142), understands it as meaning *virgin measures*, like the German *Jungfrauweis*. Gesenius, who supposes that it refers to the female voice or treble, regards the title—עַל-מוּת—"upon Muth," as being the same as עַל עַלְמוֹת, in Ps. xlvi., "Upon Alamoth," and supposes that it is derived from עַלְמָה, *almah*—a virgin.

(2) The other opinion is that which supposes that the title is the beginning of some old and well-known melody in common use, and that the idea is, that this psalm was to be sung to that melody. That melody was, as expressed by Tholuck and others, a melody *on the death of a son*, and was set to some hymn that had been composed with reference to such an event. This is founded on the supposition that the national melodies had become in some degree fixed and unchangeable, or that certain melodies or *tunes* originally composed for a particular occasion had become popular, and that the melody would be affixed to new pieces of music. This is common in the East; and, indeed, it is common in all countries. See this idea illustrated in Rosenmüller (Morgenland, No. 800). The meaning, as thus expressed, is, "According to the manner (or, to the air) of the song (or poem) called *Death to the Son*." Thus understood, it does not refer to the death of Absalom (as some have supposed), since there is nothing in the psalm that would correspond with such a supposition; nor to the death of Goliath, as the Targum supposes; but the composition was to be sung to the well-known air, or tune, entitled "Death to the Son." But when that air was composed, or on what occasion, there is of course no possibility now of ascertaining; and equally impossible is it to recover the *air*, or *tune*. The literal meaning of the title is עַל, *al*, on, or according to—מוּת, *muth*, death—לַבֵּן, *labbain*, to the son.

1. *I will praise* thee, O LORD. That is, in view of the merciful interpositions referred to in the psalm (vers. 3—5), and in view of the attributes of God's character which had been displayed on that occasion (vers. 7—12). ¶ *With my whole heart.* Not with divided affection, or with partial gratitude. He meant that *all* his powers should be employed in this service; that he would give utterance to his feelings of gratitude and adoration in the loftiest and purest manner possible. ¶ *I will show forth.* I will recount or narrate—to wit, in this song of praise. ¶ *All thy marvellous works.* All his works or doings fitted to excite admiration or wonder. The reference here is particularly to what God had done which had given occasion to this psalm, but still the psalmist designs undoubtedly to connect with this the purpose to give a *general* expression of praise in view of *all* that God had done that was fitted to excite such feelings.

2. *I will be glad.* I will rejoice,

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou [h] most high.

3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

4 For thou hast [1] maintained my right and my cause; thou

[h] Psa. lxxxiii. 18.

[1] *made my judgment.*

and will express my joy. ¶ *And rejoice in thee.* I will exult; I will triumph. That is, he would express his joy *in God*—in knowing that there was such a Being; in all that he had done for him; in all the evidences of his favour and friendship. ¶ *Will sing praise to thy name.* To *thee;* the name often being put for the person. ¶ *O thou Most High.* Thou who art supreme—the God over all. See Notes on Ps. vii. 17.

3. *When mine enemies are turned back.* Who these enemies were, the psalmist does not say. It is clear, however, as was remarked in the introduction, that the psalm was composed (*a*) in view of a victory which *had been* achieved over some formidable enemies; and (*b*) in view of some dangers still impending from a similar source. The literal meaning of the passage here is, "In the turning of my enemies back;" that is, in their retreat, discomfiture, overthrow. So far as the Hebrew form of expression is concerned, this may either refer to what *had been done,* or to what *would be;* and may imply either that they had been turned back, or that the psalmist hoped and believed that they would be; for in either case the fact would show the Divine perfections, and give occasion for gratitude and praise. The *verbs* with which this is connected—"they shall fall and perish"—are indeed in the Hebrew, as in our version, in the future tense; but this does not necessarily determine the question whether the psalmist refers to what *had* occurred or what *would* occur. His attitude is this: he contemplates his enemies as mighty and formidable; he sees the danger which exists when such enemies surround one; he looks at the interposition of God, and he sees that whenever it occurs it would be followed by this consequence, that they would stumble and fall before him. But while this verse does not determine the question whether he refers to what has been, or to what would be, the subsequent verses (4—6) seem to settle it, where he speaks as if this were already done, and as if God had interposed in a remarkable manner in discomfiting his foes. I regard this, therefore, as a reflection on what *had* occurred, and as expressing what was then actually a ground of praise and thanksgiving. ¶ *They shall fall and perish.* A general statement in view of what had occurred, meaning that this would always be the case. ¶ *At thy presence.* Before thee; that is, when thou dost manifest thyself. This was the reason why they would stumble and fall, and is equivalent to saying, that "whenever mine enemies are turned back, the reason why they stumble and fall is *thy presence.* It is the interposition of thy power. It is not to be traced to the prowess of man that they thus turn back, and that they fall and perish; it is to be traced to the fact that *thou art present,*—that thou dost interpose." It is thus an acknowledgment of God as the author of the victory in all cases.

4. *For thou hast maintained my right and my cause.* My righteous cause; that is, when he was unequally attacked. When his enemies came upon him in an unprovoked and cruel manner, God had interposed and had defended his cause. This shows that the psalmist refers to something that had occurred in the past; also that he regarded his cause as right,—for the interposition of God in his behalf had confirmed him in this belief. ¶ *Thou satest in the throne judging right.* As if he had been seated on a bench

gatest in the throne [1] judging right.

5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name [i] for ever and ever.

6 [2] O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and

[1] *in righteousness.*

[i] Prov. x. 7.

[2] Or, *the destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end; and* their *cities hast thou destroyed.*

of justice, and had decided on the merits of his cause before he interfered in his behalf. It was not the result of impulse, folly, partiality, or favouritism; it was because he had, as a judge, considered the matter, and had decided that the right was with the author of the psalm, and not with his enemies. As the result of that determination of the case, he had interposed to vindicate him, and to overthrow his adversaries. Compare Ps. viii. 3—8.

5. *Thou hast rebuked the heathen.* Not the heathen in general, or the nations at large, but those who are particularly referred to in this psalm—those who are described as the enemies of the writer and of God. On the word rendered *heathen* here—גּוֹיִם, *goim*—see Notes on Ps. ii. 1. The word *rebuke* here does not mean, as it does usually with us, to chide with words, but it means that he had done this by deeds; that is, by overcoming or vanquishing them. The reference is, undoubtedly, to some of those nations with whom the writer had been at war, and who were the enemies of himself and of God, and to some signal act of the Divine interposition by which they had been overcome, or in which the author of the psalm had gained a victory. De Wette understands this as referring to "barbarians, foreigners, heathen." David, in the course of his life, was often in such circumstances as are here supposed, though to what particular event he refers it would not be possible now to decide. ¶ *Thou hast destroyed the wicked.* The Hebrew here is in the singular number—רָשָׁע—though it may be used collectively, and as synonymous with the word *heathen.* Comp. Isa. xiv. 5; Ps. lxxxiv. 10; cxxv. 3. The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, "Thou hast destroyed the impious Goliath." The reference is undoubtedly to the enemies meant by the word *heathen,* and the writer speaks of them not only *as* heathen or foreigners, but as characterized by *wickedness,* which was doubtless a correct description of their general character. ¶ *Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.* As when a nation is conquered, and subdued; when it is made a province of the conquering nation, and loses its own government, and its distinct existence as a people, and its name is no more recorded among the kingdoms of the earth. This is such language as would denote entire subjugation, and it is probably to some such event that the psalmist refers. Nations have often by conquest thus lost their independence and their distinct existence, by becoming incorporated into others. To some such entire subjugation by conquest the psalmist undoubtedly here refers.

6. *O thou enemy!* This verse has been very variously rendered and explained. For an examination of the particular views entertained of it, see particularly Rosenmüller, *in loc.* The reference is doubtless to the enemies mentioned in the previous verses; and the idea is substantially the same—that they were completely overcome and subdued. The phrase, "O thou enemy," is probably to be regarded as the nominative absolute. "The enemy—his destructions or desolations are finished for ever. He will now no more engage in *that* work." The attention of the writer is fixed on them, and on the fact that they will no more engage in the work of desolation. It is not, therefore, properly to be regarded, as it is rendered in the common translation, as

thou hast destroyed cities; [k]their memorial is perished with them.

7 [l]But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment:

8 [m]And he shall judge the world

k 2 Kings xix. 25, etc. l Psa. cii. 26. m Rev. xx. 12, 13.

an apostrophe to the enemy, but rather as indicating a state of mind in which the writer is meditating on his foes, and on the fact that they would no more engage in the work in which they had been occupied—of laying cities and towns in ruins. ¶ *Destructions are come to a perpetual end.* That is, *thy* destructions are finished, completed, accomplished. There are to be no more of them. This may either refer to their *acts* causing destruction, or laying waste cities and towns, meaning that they would no more accomplish this work; or to the destruction or ruins which they had caused in laying waste cities —the ruins which marked their career —meaning that the number of such *ruins* was now complete, and that no more would be added, for they themselves were overthrown. The word rendered *destructions* means properly desolations, waste places, ruins, and seem here to refer to the wastes or ruins which the enemy had made; and the true idea is, that such desolations were now complete, or that they would not be suffered to devastate any more cities and fields. Prof. Alexander renders this, "*finished,* completed *are* (*his*) *ruins,* desolations, *for ever; i. e.*, he is ruined or made desolate for ever." ¶ *And thou hast destroyed cities.* That is, in thy desolating career. This, considered as an address to the enemy, would seem to refer to the career of some victor who had carried fire and sword through the land, and whose course had been marked by smoking ruins. This was, however, now at an end, for God had interposed, and had given the author of the psalm a victory over his foe. Prof. Alexander regards this, less properly, as an address to God, meaning that he had destroyed the cities of the enemy. The idea is, rather, that this enemy had been distinguished for spreading desolation and ruin, and that this career was now closed for ever. ¶ *Their memorial is perished with them.* The names of the cities, referring to their utter destruction, and to the character of the warfare which had been waged. It had been utterly barbarous and vicious; the enemy had left nothing to testify even what the city had been, and its name had ceased to be mentioned. See Notes on ver. 5. This seems to be mentioned as a justification of the warfare which the author of the psalm had waged against this enemy, and as showing why God had interposed and had given him the victory.

7. *But the* LORD *shall endure for ever.* Jehovah is eternal—always the same. Though these cities have become desolate, and the enemy has been permitted to triumph, and nations and people have passed away, yet God is ever the same, unaffected by these changes and desolations, and in due time he will always interfere and vindicate his own character, and defend the oppressed and the wronged. ¶ *He hath prepared his throne for judgment.* See ver. 4. He sits as a just judge among the nations, and he will see that right is done. The wicked, though temporarily prosperous, cannot always triumph; and the righteous, though cast down and oppressed, cannot always remain thus, for God, the just Judge, will rise in their defence and for their deliverance. The unchangeableness of God, therefore, is at the same time the ground of confidence for the righteous, and the ground of dread for the wicked. The eternal principles of right will ultimately triumph.

8. *And he shall judge the world in righteousness.* The word here rendered *world* means properly the habitable earth; and then it denotes the inhabitants that dwell upon the earth. The statement here is general,

in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

9 The LORD also will be [1] a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

10 And they that know thy name [n] will put their trust in

[1] *an high place.*

[n] Prov. xviii. 10.

and is suggested by what is referred to in the previous verses. In the particular case on which the psalm turns, God *had* manifested himself as a just Judge. He had overthrown the enemies of himself and of truth; he had interposed in behalf of the righteous: and from this fact the psalmist makes the natural and proper inference that this would be found to be his character in regard to all the world; this indicated what, in all his dealings with men, he would always be found to be; this showed what he would be whenever he in any way pronounced a judgment on mankind. It may be added here that this will be found to be true in the great final judgment; that it will be in accordance with the principles of eternal justice. ¶ *He shall minister judgment.* He will declare or pronounce judgment; he will execute the office of judge. ¶ *To the people.* To all people; to the nations of the earth. This corresponds with what, in the former part of the verse, is called the *world;* and the declaration is, that in his dealings with the dwellers on the earth he will be guided by the strictest principles of justice. ¶ *In uprightness.* In rectitude. He will not be influenced by partiality; he will show no favouritism; he will not be bribed. He will do exact justice to all.

9. *The* LORD *also will be a refuge.* Margin, *an high place.* The margin expresses the more exact sense of the Hebrew word— מִשְׂגָּב, *misgob.* It means properly height, altitude; then a height, rock, crag; and then, as such localities, being inaccessible to an enemy, were sought in times of danger as places of secure retreat, it comes to denote a place of security and refuge, Ps. xviii. 2; xlvi. 7, 11; xlviii. 3; lix. 9, 17; xciv. 22. The declaration here is equivalent to what is so often said, that God is a refuge, a rock, a high tower, a defence; meaning, that those referred to might find safety in him. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *For the oppressed.* Literally, for those who are *crushed, broken;* hence, the dejected, afflicted, unhappy,—דָּךְ, *dak* —from דָּכַךְ, *dakak*—to beat small; to break in pieces; to crush. The allusion here is to those who are wronged or down-trodden; to the victims of tyranny and injustice. Such may look to God to vindicate them and their cause, and they will not look in vain. Sooner or later he will manifest himself as their protector and their helper. See ver. 12. ¶ *A refuge in times of trouble.* Not only for the oppressed, but for all those who are in trouble. Comp. Ps. xlvi. 1. That is, all such may come to him with the assurance that he will be ready to pity them in their sorrows, and to deliver them. The psalmist had found it so in his own case; and he infers that it would be so in all cases, and that this might be regarded as the general character of God.

10. *And they that know thy name.* All who are acquainted with thee; all those who have been made acquainted with the manifestations of thy goodness, and with the truth respecting thy character. ¶ *Will put their trust in thee.* That is, all who have any just views of God, or who understand his real character, will confide in him. This is as much as to say, that he *has* a character which is worthy of confidence,—since they who know him best most unreservedly rely on him. It is the same as saying that all the revelations of his character in his word and works are such as to make it *proper* to confide in him. The more intimate our knowledge of

thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the [1]humble.

[1] Or, *afflicted.*

God, the more entirely shall we trust in him; the more we learn of his real character, the more shall we see that he is worthy of universal love. It is much to say of any one that the more he is known the more he will be loved; and in saying this of God, it is but saying that one reason why men do *not* confide in him is that they do not understand his real character. ¶ *For thou,* LORD, *hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* Thou hast never left them when they have come to thee with a confiding heart. David means, doubtless, to refer here particularly to his own case, to derive a conclusion from his particular case in regard to the general character of God. But what is here affirmed is still true, and always has been true, and always will be true, that God does not *forsake* those who put their trust in him. Men forsake *him;* he does not forsake *them.*

11. *Sing praises to the* LORD. As the result of these views of his character, and at the remembrance of his doings. The heart of the psalmist is full of exultation and joy at the remembrance of the Divine interposition, and he naturally breaks out into these strong expressions, calling on others to rejoice also. ¶ *Which dwelleth in Zion.* On the word *Zion,* see Notes on Psalm ii. 6. Comp. Ps. iii. 4; v. 7. As Zion was the place where at this time the tabernacle was set up, and the worship of God was celebrated, it is spoken of as his dwelling-place. ¶ *Declare among the people his doings.* Make general and wide proclamation of what he has done; that is, make him known abroad, in his true character, that others may be brought also to put their trust in him, and to praise him.

12. *When he maketh inquisition for blood.* When he *inquires* after blood; that is, when he comes forth with this view, to wit, for purposes of punishment. There is allusion here to such passages as that in Gen. ix. 5, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man." The idea is, that when blood was shed in murder, God would seek out the murderer; he would require satisfaction of him who had shed the blood; he would punish the offender. The language, *there,* becomes equivalent to that of seeking punishment for murder, and then for sin in general; and the representation *here* is that of God as going forth in the capacity of an executioner of his own laws to inflict punishment on the guilty. ¶ *He remembereth them.* "He remembereth," says Prof. Alexander, "the bloods or murders," since the *word blood,* as in Ps. v. 6, is in the plural—*bloods.* The better interpretation, however, is, that the word "*them*" here refers to the oppressed and the afflicted—for that is the main idea in the passage. See vers. 8, 9. When he goes forth in the earth to execute judgment on the wicked; when he cuts them down in his wrath; when he sweeps them away as with a flood,—the punishment will not be indiscriminate. He will then mark the oppressed, the afflicted, the persecuted, the troubled, and the sad, and will interpose to save them,—delivering them from the storms of wrath. The idea, then, is, that the righteous will not be forgotten; that even in the most fierce and awful of his dispensations he will still regard them, and interpose to save them. ¶ *He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.* Marg., *afflicted.* The margin expresses the true idea. The reference is not to the *humble* in the

13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the

common sense of that term, but to the afflicted; the oppressed; to those who are in trouble, ver. 9. He will then remember the cry which in their afflictions they have been long sending up to him.

13. *Have mercy upon me, O* LORD. The cry for mercy implies that though God *had* interposed and granted them surprising deliverances, yet he was still surrounded by enemies, and was still in trouble. See introd. to the psalm, §§ 2, 3. He had been delivered from many troubles, but there were many still pressing upon him, and he now calls on God to interpose further in his behalf, and to grant him entire deliverance from all his sorrows and dangers. The trouble to which he here refers was of the same kind as that adverted to in the former part of the psalm—that arising from the efforts of formidable enemies. ¶ *Consider my trouble.* Do not forget this trouble; bear it in remembrance; look upon its character and its depth, and mercifully interpose to deliver me. ¶ Which I suffer *of them that hate me.* Or, "see my suffering arising from those that hate me; or, which is produced by those who hate me." The design is to fix the attention on the greatness of that suffering as caused by his "haters" or by his enemies,—the foes that were still unsubdued. ¶ *Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.* Thou on whom I rely to do this; or, who hast done it in times past. The idea is, that he was apparently near to the gates of death, and that the only one who could raise him up was God, and he now invoked His interposition that it might be done. The phrase "gates of death" relates to the prevalent views about the unseen world,—the world where the dead abide. That world was represented as beneath; as a dark and gloomy abode; as enclosed by bars and walls; as entered by gates,—the grave leading to it. See Introd. to Job, § 7 (10), and Notes on Job x. 21, 22. The psalmist felt that he had come near to that dark and gloomy abode, and that God only could rescue him from it; therefore, in the trouble which now threatened his life, he looks to him to interfere and save him.

14. *That I may show forth all thy praise.* That I may praise thee in the land of the living; that I may *finish* the work of praise by rendering to thee all that is due. The idea is, that the dead could not praise God, or that his praise could be uttered only by the living; and he calls on God, therefore, to interpose and save him, that he might yet worship and praise him on the earth. In this sentiment the psalmist utters only what man naturally feels when he looks upon the grave; that it is an end of human plans and pursuits; that it is a land of silence; that the worship of God is not there celebrated. Such language must be regarded as uttered under the impulse of natural feeling, and not as uttered by the deliberate judgment of the mind when calmly contemplating the whole subject. All pious persons have these feelings at times, and it was proper that these feelings should be expressed in the sacred writings, as illustrating human nature even under the influence of religion. The same sentiment occurs in several places, as Ps. cxv. 17, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." See Notes on Ps. vi. 5. It is not necessary to say that the sacred writers *had* brighter views at times than these. But who can keep the mind *always* from desponding when it looks at the grave? Who can *always* help feeling that it is a place of darkness and gloom?

daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

16 The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth:

¶ *In the gates of the daughter of Zion.* As contradistinguished from the "gates of death." Gates in ancient cities were places of concourse, where important transactions were performed; and the "gates" of Jerusalem were regarded as attractive and sacred, because it was *through* them that the people passed on their way to worship God at the tabernacle or in the temple. Hence it is said, Ps. lxxxvii. 2, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Ps. c. 4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving." Comp. Ps. cxviii. 19. The phrase, "daughter of Zion," means Jerusalem. For the reason of this appellation see Notes on Isa. i. 8. The language here used proves that the psalm was composed after Zion or Jerusalem was made the capital of the kingdom and the seat of public worship, and, therefore, that it cannot refer, as is supposed in the Chaldee Paraphrase, to the death of Goliath. ¶ *I will rejoice in thy salvation.* In the salvation which thou wilt bestow on me; here particularly, in delivering him from his dangers. The language, however, is general, and may be employed with reference to salvation of any kind.

15. *The heathen.* Heb., "The nations;" that is, the idolatrous people that were arrayed against him. See Notes on ver. 5. ¶ *Are sunk down.* That is, referring to those who *had* been overcome, as mentioned in ver. 5; or to those who still encompassed him, in respect to whom he was so certain that they *would* be overcome that he could speak of it as a thing already accomplished. According to the former view, it would be an encouragement derived from the past; according to the latter, it would indicate unwavering confidence in God, and the certain assurance of ultimate victory. It is not easy to determine which is the true interpretation. The Hebrew is, "Sunk are the nations in the pit which they have made;" that is, he sees them sinking down to destruction. ¶ *In the pit* that *they made.* In which they designed that others should fall. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15. ¶ *In the net which they hid.* Which they laid for others. The allusion here is to a spring-net made to capture birds or wild beasts. ¶ *Is their own foot taken.* The net here referred to seems to have been particularly a net to take wild beasts by securing one of their feet, like a modern *trap.* The idea is, that they had been brought into the destruction which they had designed for others. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15, 16.

16. *The* LORD *is known* by *the judgment* which *he executeth.* By what he does in his dealings with men, in dispensing rewards and punishments, bestowing blessings upon the righteous, and sending punishments upon the ungodly. That is, his character can be learned from his dealings with mankind; or, by studying the dispensation of his Providence, we may learn what he is. This is always a fair and proper way of estimating *character,* alike in regard to God and man; and it is proper, at all times, to study what God *does,* to learn what he *is.* ¶ *The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.* The same sentiment which is expressed here occurs in Ps. vii. 16. The idea is that the wicked are the cause of their own destruction; their own devices and designs are the means of their ruin, and they are made their own executioners. It is this to which the writer seems particularly to refer in the former part of the verse, when he says that "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." This great principle is brought out in his dealings with men, that the

the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. [1] Higgaion. [o] Selah.

[1] i.e., *meditation.* [o] Psa. xix. 14; xcii. 3.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget [p] God.

[p] Psa. l. 22.

course which wicked men pursue is the cause of their own ruin. The laws of God in a great measure execute themselves, and men bring upon themselves their own destruction. It is the highest perfection of government to make the laws execute themselves. ¶ *Higgaion.* Marg., *Meditation.* This word occurs elsewhere only in the following places, Ps. xix. 14, rendered *meditation;* Ps. xcii. 3, rendered *solemn sound;* Lam. iii. 62, rendered *device.* Its proper meaning is, *murmur; muttering; the utterance of a low sound,* as the low sound of a harp; or the murmuring or muttering of one who talks to himself; and then *meditation.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 1, on the word "*imagine,*"—Marg., *meditate,*—the verb from which this is derived. Gesenius supposes that it is here a musical sound. So it is understood by the LXX.,—ᾠδὴ διαψάλματος. It is not known why it is introduced here. There seems to be nothing in the *sense* which demands it, as there is no particular reason why the reader should pause and meditate *here* rather than in any other place in the psalm. It is doubtless a mere musical pause, though perhaps indicating the *kind* of pause in the music, as some peculiar sound or interlude on the musical instrument that was employed. ¶ *Selah.* Another musical term, see Notes on Ps. iii. 2. This indicates a general pause; the word Higgaion denotes the particular kind of pause.

17. *The wicked.* All the wicked; all who come properly under the denomination of wicked persons. Doubtless the writer had particularly in his eye the enemies with whom he was contending, and in reference to whom the psalm was composed; and he meant to say that *they* would be certainly punished. But what was true in regard to them, was true of all others of similar character, and the statement is therefore made in a universal form—*all* the wicked. ¶ *Shall be turned.* Shall *turn back,* or be turned from their present course. The idea is, that they were now pursuing a certain course, but that they would be turned back from that, or would fail and retreat; and instead of going on to victory, would be defeated, and would sink into hell. The idea is essentially the same as that which is expressed in ver. 3 above:—"When mine enemies are *turned back.*" ¶ *Into hell* — לִשְׁאוֹלָה — *to Sheol,* Hades, *the grave, the world of departed spirits.* This is the usual meaning of this word. See Notes on Luke xvi. 23; Isa. xiv. 9; Job x. 21, 22. Though the word, however, originally denoted the grave, the region of the dead, the world of departed spirits, yet it was also supposed that there was a *distinction* in the condition of the dead; and the word gradually came to denote the abode of the *wicked* portion of the dead, and hence the place of future punishment. So it is undoubtedly used in Luke xvi. 23. It is clear (*a*) that this cannot be understood here as referring to the *grave* in its ordinary sense, for the righteous will be as certainly consigned to the grave, or will as certainly die, as the wicked; (*b*) that it cannot refer to the invisible world, the abodes of the dead, in the ordinary sense of the term—for it is *as* true that the righteous will enter that world as that sinners will. There must be some sense, in which the word is used here, different from that of the grave, or different merely from death as such. This sense can be only one of two—either (1) that the author means that they will be cut off by a sudden and violent death, considered as a calamity or as a punishment; or (2) that he regarded the *Sheol* men-

18 For the needy [q] shall not alway be forgotten: the expecta-

[q] Isa. xli. 17.

tioned here as a place of punishment. Calvin thinks it is not improbable that the former of these is intended; but it may be observed in regard to this, (*a*) that this is not the language usually employed to denote that idea—the phrase, to be *cut off*, or *cut down*, being that which a writer intending to express that idea, would most naturally use—since the phrase, to be sent to *Sheol*, considered as the grave or the region of the dead, would express nothing peculiar in regard to the wicked; and (*b*) the spirit of the passage seems to demand the idea that the wicked referred to here would be consigned to a place of punishment, that they would be cut off *as* wicked persons, and treated accordingly. This interpretation is strengthened by the other member of the parallelism, where it is said, "and all the nations that forget God;" since it is no more true that the nations "that forget God" will be "turned into the *grave*, or the world of departed spirits," than it is that the nations that serve and obey him will. It seems to me, therefore, that this is one of the passages in which it is clear that the word *Sheol* had connected with it the idea of punishment beyond the grave—of a region where the wicked would be treated according to their deserts, and in a manner different from the treatment of the righteous; that although the general idea of that under-world was that it was a dark and gloomy place, yet that there was *also* the idea that the abode of the wicked there was far more gloomy than that of the righteous; and that it was regarded as a *punishment* to be consigned to that region. It is not necessary to suppose that they had the full idea attached to the word *hell* which we have, any more than that they had the same full and clear idea of *heaven* that we have. Light has come into our world on all these subjects gradually, and there is nothing which requires us to suppose that the earlier sacred writers had the same clear views which the later writers had, or that either of them knew *all* that is to be known. Comp. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. ¶ And *all the nations that forget God.* All who are strangers to him, or who are ignorant of the true God. See Notes on Rom. ii. 12. From the character and prospective doom of those to whom the psalmist particularly referred in this psalm, he is led to make this *general* remark about all who sustain the same character which they did. Under the administration of the same God those of the same character would share alike, for "there is no respect of persons with him;" and it is the perfection of an impartial government to treat all of the same character in the same manner. If we can, therefore, ascertain how, under his administration, one sinner will be treated in the future world, we can infer how all of the same character will be treated; if we can learn how God will deal with one people, we can infer how he will deal with all. The statement here is, that all the wicked, of whatever nation, will be consigned to punishment in the future world. The phrase here used, "that *forget* God," denotes those who are not disposed or inclined to remember and honour him. The idea seems to be that though they might have known him, they did not choose to retain him in their knowledge, but gave themselves up to a life of idolatry and sin. Comp. Notes on Rom. i. 19—21, 28.

18. *For the needy.* The poor; those who are dependent and helpless. ¶ *Shall not alway be forgotten.* That is, by God. He will interfere and save them by destroying their enemies. He will not suffer the wicked always to persecute and oppress the righteous. In due time he will vindicate his own cause; will deliver the oppressed and down-trodden, and will consign their oppressors to deserved punishment. This is as true now, in regard to all

tion of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, [r] O LORD; *that* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men. Selah.

r Psa. lxxxiii. 15, 16.

the oppressed and their oppressors, as it was in the time of the psalmist. ¶ *The expectation of the poor.* Of the afflicted and the oppressed. The word *expectation* refers to their hope; their desire; their earnest looking for deliverance. In that state men naturally look for the Divine interposition, and the psalmist says that in that they will not always be disappointed. ¶ *Shall* not *perish for ever.* The word "*not*" is supplied here by our translators, but not improperly. It is thus supplied in the Targum, and in the Syriac, the Vulgate and the Greek. Such forms of construction are not uncommon. Comp. Ps. i. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 6. "The negative is repeated from the preceding member."—*Michaelis.*

19. *Arise, O* LORD. See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. ¶ *Let not man prevail.* Against thee and thy cause. The war waged against the psalmist he regarded as waged against God, and he calls upon him, therefore, to interpose and vindicate his own cause. The word rendered *prevail* is *be strong;* that is, let not man seem to be stronger than thou art, or let him not succeed in his efforts in opposing thy cause. ¶ *Let the heathen be judged in thy sight.* The nations to whom the writer had referred in the psalm, that were arrayed against him and against God. He desired that a just judgment should be passed on them, and that God would vindicate the righteous, and save them from the power of those who oppressed and wronged them.

20. *Put them in fear, O* LORD. From this it is evident that the enemies of the psalmist were bold, daring, confident in their own strength, and in the belief that they would succeed. He prays, therefore, that these bold and daring invaders of the rights of others might be made to stand in awe, and to tremble before the great and terrible majesty of God; that they might thus have just views of themselves, and see how weak and feeble they were as compared with Him. ¶ That *the nations may know.* The nations particularly referred to in this psalm as arrayed against the writer. ¶ *Themselves* to be but *men.* That they may see themselves as they are,—poor, feeble creatures; as nothing when compared with God; that instead of their pride and self-confidence, their belief that they can accomplish any purpose that they choose, they may see that they are not like God, but that they are frail and feeble mortals. The psalmist seems to have supposed that if they understood this, they would be humbled and would desist from their purposes; and he therefore prays that God would interpose and show them precisely what they were. If men understood this, they would not dare to array themselves against their Maker.

PSALM X.

§ 1. *Author and occasion of the psalm.*—This psalm, like Ps. i., ii., and many others, has no title to indicate its authorship; nor is there anything in the psalm itself which can enable us to determine this with any certainty. From the place which it occupies among the acknowledged Psalms of David, it is morally certain that it was regarded by those who arranged the Book of Psalms, as having been composed by him. There is nothing in the psalm to forbid this supposition.

Of course nothing is known as to the occasion on which it was composed. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the ninth and tenth Psalms are united, and reckoned as the ninth Psalm; and thenceforward the reckoning proceeds according to this arrangement, the eleventh in the Hebrew being numbered in those versions as the tenth, etc. This arrangement continues to the hundred and thirteenth Psalm inclusive. In those

PSALM X.

WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why* hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?

versions, Ps. cxiv. and cxv. of the Hebrew form but one psalm, and the reckoning coincides. But the hundred and sixteenth Psalm in Hebrew is, in those versions, divided into two, and the hundred and forty-seventh Psalm in Hebrew is, in those versions, divided into two, thus completing the number of one hundred and fifty—making the number in the Hebrew, and the Latin Vulgate, and the Septuagint, the same. It is not now known by whom these divisions were made, or on what pretence they were made. There is no known reason for making the divisions of the Psalms that occur in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate.

There is no evidence, therefore, that this psalm was composed at the same time, and on the same occasion, as the ninth, and there is nothing in the psalm itself that would necessarily lead to this supposition. It is as independent of that in its structure, as one psalm usually is of another.

So far as appears from the psalm itself, it was composed like the former, and like many others, when the writer was in the midst of trouble; and when, for the time, he seemed to be forsaken by God, ver. 1. The *nature* of that trouble is so far indicated as to show that it arose from the conduct of some formidable enemy, some one who was wicked, some one who was pursuing a secret and underhanded, a clandestine and treacherous course, to destroy the reputation or the life of the author of the psalm. In these circumstances the writer calls upon God to interpose for him. Nothing is indicated, however, by which we can ascertain *who* this enemy was, or on what occasion, in the life of David, the psalm was composed. It is only necessary to add, that there were several occasions in the life of David which corresponded with what is stated in the psalm, and that it is not necessary to understand the particular occasion more clearly in order to see the meaning of the psalm.

§ 2. *Contents of the psalm.*—The psalm is properly divided into two parts.

The first contains an account of the character of the enemy to whom the writer refers, vers. 1-11; the second is an appeal to God to interpose and deliver him from the machinations of this foe, vers. 12-18.

I. The characteristics of the enemy, vers. 1-11. Those characteristics were the following:

(*a*) He was proud, and on that account persecuted the poor, ver. 2.

(*b*) He was a boaster, and especially, it would seem, was one who was disposed to boast of his wealth, ver. 3.

(*c*) He was a practical atheist; one too proud to seek after God, or to acknowledge his dependence on him, ver. 4.

(*d*) His ways were *always* grievous, or adapted to produce evil, and the reason was that he had no just views on moral subjects—that the great principles of truth and right were "far above out of his sight," ver. 5.

(*e*) He was a man who had no apprehensions about the future; one who felt that his course would be one of continued prosperity, and that adversity would never come upon him, ver. 6.

(*f*) He was profane and openly fraudulent, ver. 7

(*g*) He was insidious, artful, and underhanded in his doings; a man who would stoop to any act of duplicity and treachery to accomplish his purposes, vers. 8-10.

(*h*) And he acted as if God had "forgotten," that is, as if God would pass over offences; as though he did not see or regard them, ver. 11.

II. An appeal to God to deliver him from the machinations of this foe, vers. 12-18. This appeal consists of the following parts:

(*a*) A solemn address to God, beseeching him to remember the cry of the humble or the afflicted, ver. 12.

(*b*) Arguments to enforce this appeal, or reasons why God *should* interpose, vers. 13, 14, 15. These arguments are, (1) That he had seen all this; that the effort of the wrong-doer to conceal what he had done was vain; and (2) that the poor and afflicted had committed himself to God with a firm confidence that he would protect those who relied on him.

(*c*) The expression of a solemn and full conviction on the part of the writer of the psalm that God *would* thus interfere, and save those who put their trust in Him, vers. 16-18.

1. *Why standest thou afar off, O* LORD? That is, What is the reason

2 [1] The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: [s] let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his [2] heart's desire, and [3] blesseth

[1] *In the pride of the wicked he doth.*
s Prov. v. 22.
[2] *soul's.* [3] *the covetous blesseth* himself, *he abhorreth the Lord.*

why thou doest this? The thought on which this is based is that God might be expected to interpose in a time of trouble, and that his aid might then be looked for. Yet in this case he seemed to be an indifferent spectator of the sorrows and afflictions of the wronged and oppressed. This filled the mind of the writer with surprise, and he could not account for it, especially in view of the character of the person or persons who had wronged the author of the psalm. To *stand afar off* in such circumstances, is an attitude of indifference and unconcern—as when others do not come near us if we are sick, or are bereaved, or are in circumstances of poverty and want. That *man* should do this, would have produced no surprise in the mind of the writer; that *God* should do it was something that filled him with wonder. ¶ Why *hidest thou* thyself? As if God concealed himself, or kept away. He did not manifest himself, but seemed to let the afflicted man suffer alone. ¶ *In times of trouble.* Affliction, sorrow, persecution. The particular trouble referred to here was that which was produced by the machinations of the enemy or enemies whose character is described in the following verses. The question, however, is put in a general form, as if it were strange and unaccountable that God should *ever* fail to interpose in time of trouble. How often has there been occasion to ask this question in our world!

2. *The wicked in his pride.* Marg., *In the pride of the wicked he doth.* The margin is a literal translation of the Hebrew; but the sense is the same. The meaning is, that the fact that the wicked persecuted the poor, in the case referred to, was to be traced to his pride, haughtiness, ambition; that is, in pursuing his own selfish and ambitious purposes, he became utterly regardless of the rights and comforts of others. He esteemed their interest and happiness as unworthy of regard in comparison with his own aims and purposes, and trampled down all their rights in prosecuting his own ends. The term *wicked* here—in the original in the singular number, רָשָׁע, though perhaps used collectively—means properly the *wicked one*, or the *wicked man*, and doubtless refers to some enemy that David had in his eye, and from whom he was at that time suffering wrong. It is not possible now to ascertain with certainty who this was; but as the whole description proceeds in the singular number (vers. 3—11), it is most natural to suppose that this refers to one individual. ¶ *Doth persecute the poor.* יִדְלַק עָנִי. Professor Alexander renders this, "*burns the sufferer.*" Luther, muss der Elende leiden—"must the afflicted suffer." De Wette: ängstigen sich die Elenden. The Latin Vulgate: "When the impious [man] is proud, the poor [man] is burned:" incenditur pauper. So the Septuagint. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes it means, *to burn with anguish.* Horsley renders it, "In the exaltation of the impious one the helpless is consumed." But it seems to me that our common version has expressed the true sense. The word rendered *persecuteth* — דָּלַק, *dalak*—means properly to burn, to flame; then to burn with love, with anger; then to burn *after* any one, to persecute. See it explained in the Notes on Ps. vii. 13. According to the most natural application of the word here, it would seem to mean, "In the pride of the wicked, he persecutes the poor or the afflicted;" that is, he burns after him; he is inflamed against him; he hotly pursues

the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

him. The word *poor* in this place—עָנִי, *ani*—means the afflicted; the crushed; the downtrodden; those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty. The psalmist doubtless refers to himself as a poor and persecuted man; and the time in his life would seem to be when he was without a protector or friend, probably before he came to the throne. ¶ *Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.* The artifice, plan, or scheme, which they have formed. That is, they have formed a scheme to take advantage of, or to destroy others; and the psalmist prays that, as a just retribution, this very calamity may come upon them. No man could have a right to complain if the mischief and wrong which he had devised for others should be brought upon himself; and if it were certain that this in all cases would occur, there could be nothing that would so effectually deter men from wrong-doing. The psalmist, then, simply prays that justice might be done. Compare Notes on Ps. v. 10; vii. 15, 16. The plural form of the verb is used here, but it is not certain that the psalmist had more than one enemy in view, for on expressing his feelings towards that one enemy he may have designed to use language which would be applicable to all in similar circumstances.

3. *For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire.* Marg., as in Heb., *soul's.* The main idea in this verse seems to be that he is a *boaster*—a man who makes some proclamation about himself as being superior to others, and who, in that proportion, looks with disdain or contempt on others. He vaunts himself, or makes an ostentatious display of something on which he prides himself, as wealth, strength, beauty, talent, prowess, etc. The particular thing here, it would seem, of which he boasted was his natural inclinations; the propensities and passions of his soul; that is, he took pride in himself, in his own passions, desires, lusts, tastes, and made a boastful display of them, as if he regarded them as something honourable, or as something fitted to excite admiration in others. This is not a *very* uncommon characteristic of wicked men; at least it is found in a certain class of wicked men. They pride themselves in *whatever* they have in their character that is peculiar, or that is their own, for the very reason that it is *theirs;* and they become so shameless that they do not hesitate publicly to *boast* of that which should be regarded as a disgrace. A certain class of *young* men are very apt to "boast" of passions and practices which should cover their faces with the burning blush of shame. ¶ *And blesseth the covetous.* Marg., *the covetous blesseth* himself, *he abhorreth the Lord.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "*And winning* (*i.e.*, when he wins) *blesses, despises Jehovah.*" In other words, he hypocritically thanks God for his success, but despises him in his heart. This probably expresses the correct idea. The word rendered *the covetous*—בֹּצֵעַ, *botzaia*—is a participle, from the verb—בָּצַע—*bâtza*, to cut in pieces; then, to plunder, to spoil; and then, to be greedy after gain. Here, the natural construction would seem to be to refer it not to *another*, as one who was covetous, but to *himself*, as greedy, or as succeeding in the object of his desire; as referring to the fact that he *obtained* his heart's desire, and as showing what his feelings were then. He was filled with evil desires, and was so shameless of them that he openly avowed them; and when he obtained the object of his wishes, he did what is here denoted by the word *bless*—as will be explained directly. The idea in the mind of the writer seems to be that he cherished the desire, and made no secret of it, and *obtained* the object of his wishes. The natural explanation

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:* [1] God *is* not [t] in all his thoughts.

[1] Or, *all his thoughts* are, There is *no God*, Psa. xiv. 1.

[t] Eph. ii. 12.

of the *manner* in which he did this is, that it was by plunder, rapine, or spoil, for this would be most literally expressed by the word used. Comp. Prov. i. 19; xv. 27; Jer. vi. 13; viii. 10; Ezek. xxii. 12. It *might* be, however, by unjust gains, or dishonest dealing, 1 Sam. viii. 3; Isa. xxxiii. 15; lvii. 17. The word *bless* here may mean, as in the margin, blesses *himself;* or, as Prof. Alexander supposes, may mean that he blesses *the Lord*, that is, renders hypocritical thanks for his success, and professes to acknowledge that all is the gift of God, while at the same time he expresses contempt for him, and despises him in his heart. If the usual meaning of the word *bless* is to be retained, however, it would seem to be most in accordance with the spirit of the passage that he should *bless himself*, that is, his own talents, skill, power; in other words, that he should attribute all his success to himself. The idea does not seem to be that he was even professedly a religious man, but that he was a proud and vain boaster who attributed all success to himself, and despised God and his claims. It has been supposed by some, however, and with plausibility (De Wette, and others), that the word rendered *bless* here—בֵּרֵךְ, *bairaich*—as in Job i. 5, 11; ii. 9, means, not to *bless*, but to *curse*. See Notes on Job. i. 5. De Wette renders it, Der Räuber lästert schmähend Jehovah. This seems to me to be the true idea—that this braggart or braggadocio did not make any *pretensions* to religion, but was a profane man, and one who despised God and abhorred his cause. ¶ Whom *the* LORD *abhorreth*. Or, more correctly, *despises*, or *abhors the Lord*. That is, he makes shameless boast of his own corrupt and base passions; when he is successful he makes *no* acknowledgment to God, but *curses* him and *despises* or contemns him in his heart. A correct rendering then of the whole would be, "And having obtained, he *curses*—he *despises* Jehovah." Coverdale renders this, "The covetous blesseth himself, and blaspheneth the Lord." We have thus an example of most finished and shameless depravity—but alas! one that was not found in the time of David only.

4. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance.* In consequence of his pride; or, his pride is the reason of what is here stated. The "pride *of his countenance*" is a phrase that is used because pride shows itself mainly in the countenance, or in a lofty air and manner. The design is to state the influence of pride in producing the effect here specified. ¶ *Will not seek* after God. The phrase "after God," is supplied by our translators. *Something* clearly is to be supplied, and it is plainly something relating to God—either that the wicked man will not seek after God in prayer, or that he will not inquire after the proofs of his existence and attributes; or that he will not seek after his favour, or that he will not endeavour to know the Divine will. All this would be implied in seeking after God; and this is undoubtedly the state of mind that is referred to here. The sinner is unwilling, in any appropriate way, to acknowledge God. ¶ *God is not in all his thoughts.* Marg., "Or, *all his thoughts* are, There is *no God*," Ps. xiv. 1. The literal translation is, "No God [are] all his thoughts." The margin has undoubtedly expressed the meaning better than the translation in the text, since the spirit of the passage is not that the sinner had *no thought* of God, but that he thought *wrong*. The fact that he would not seek God, and that he had said that God had forgotten (ver. 11), shows that he had *some* thoughts of God. The language here

5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

is properly expressive of *belief* or *desire;* either that all his thoughts were that there *is* no God, *i. e.,* that such was the result of all his meditations and reasonings on the subject; or that he wished that it *might* be found to be so. The language will admit of either construction, and in either sense it would express the thoughts of the wicked. Both as a matter of practical belief, and as a matter of desire, the language of the wicked is, "*No God.*" The wicked wish that there were none; he practically believes that there is none. The entire verse, then, expresses the prevailing feelings of a sinner about God:—(*a*) That he *wishes* there were none, and practically *believes* that there is none; and (*b*) that the *reason* or *ground* of these feelings is *pride.* Pride will prevent him from seeking God in the following ways:—(1) It makes him unwilling to recognise his dependence on any being; (2) it makes him unwilling to confess that he is a sinner; (3) it makes him unwilling to pray; (4) it makes him unwilling to seek aid of any one, even God, in the business of life, in the prosecution of his plans, or in sickness and affliction; (5) it makes him unwilling to accede to the terms of reconciliation and salvation proposed by God, unwilling to repent, to believe, to submit to His sovereignty, to acknowledge his indebtedness to mere *grace* for the hope of eternal life. Pride is at the root of all the atheism, theoretical or practical, on the earth; at the root of all the reluctance which there is to seek the favour of God; at the root, therefore, of the misery and wretchedness of the world.

5. *His ways are always grievous.* His paths; his manner of life; his conduct towards God; his dealings with men. The word rendered "*are grievous,*" יָחִילוּ, *yâhhiloo*—has been very variously rendered. The Latin Vulgate renders it, "His ways are defiled." So the Septuagint. Coverdale renders it, "His ways are always filthy." Professor Alexander, "His ways are firm." So De Wette, "Es gelingen seine Wege." Horsley, "His ways are confident." This variety in the interpretation arises from the ambiguity of the original word—חוּל, *hhool.* The meaning of this word, as given by Gesenius, is *to turn round, to twist, to whirl;* and hence (1) to dance; (2) to be whirled, or twisted upon anything; (3) to twist oneself with pain, or to be in pain; (4) to bear or bring forth; (5) to tremble, to quake; (6) to be strong or stable, as things twisted are. Hence he translates this passage, "his ways are firm, or stable, *i. e.,* all his affairs prosper." But it seems to me plain that this is not the idea in the mind of the psalmist. He is not dwelling on the *prosperity* of the wicked, or on the result of his conduct, but on his *character.* In the previous verses he had stated some of the traits in his character, and the subsequent verses continue the description; hence it is natural that we should expect to find some peculiar feature of his *character* referred to here, and not that there should be an allusion to the stability of his affairs. It seems to me, therefore, that the exact idea here is, that his ways, or his modes of feeling and conduct were always *perverse* and *forced,* and *hard;* that there was always something tortuous and unnatural about him; that he was not straightforward and honest; that he did not see things as they are, and did not act in a plain and upright manner. ¶ *Thy judgments.* Thy laws; or, the principles of thy government. ¶ Are *far above out of his sight.* They are out of the range of his vision. He does not see them. His thoughts grovel on the earth, and he is never elevated in his views so as to see the great principles of truth. ¶ As for *all his enemies, he puffeth at them,*

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for *I shall* [1] never *be* in adversity.

[1] *unto generation and generation.*

7 His mouth is full of cursing and [2] deceit and fraud; under his tongue *is* mischief and [3] vanity.

[2] *deceits.* [3] Or. *iniquity.*

He treats them with contempt and scorn, as if he had no fear of them, or as if he were entirely confident of his own ability to overcome them. This is an illustration of his pride and self-confidence; for it is the characteristic of the proud and self-confident to boast in this manner. The word rendered "*puffeth*" means to breathe, to blow; and the idea here is, that he acted as though he could sweep them away with a breath.

6. *He hath said in his heart.* The phrase, "he hath said," means that this was his deliberate and settled character. What is here described was no sudden thing. It was not the freak of passion; it was a deliberately formed purpose. The phrase, "in his heart," means that he had purposed this; he had said this to himself in a spirit of self-gratulation and confidence. ¶ *I shall not be moved.* That is, he was confident in his present condition, and he apprehended no changes. He had formed his plans so wisely, that he believed he had nothing to apprehend; he feared neither sickness nor adversity; he dreaded not the power of his enemies; he feared nothing even from the providence of God; he supposed that he had laid the foundation for permanent prosperity. This feeling of self-confidence and of security is sometimes found, to an extent that cannot be justified, in the hearts of even good men (comp. Notes on Job xxix. 18); and it is common among the wicked. See Ps. xlix. 11; Job xxi. 9. ¶ *For* I shall *never* be *in adversity.* Marg., *unto generation and generation.* The margin expresses the correct sense. The idea of the wicked, as expressed here, is that they and their families would continue to be prosperous; that a permanent foundation was laid for honour and success, and for transmitting accumulated wealth and honours down to far distant times. It is a common feeling among wicked men that they can make permanent their titles, and possessions, and rank, and that nothing will occur to reduce them to the humble condition of others. Nothing more clearly shows the pride and atheism of the heart than this; and in nothing are the anticipations and plans of men more signally disappointed. Comp. the case of Shebna; see Notes on Isa. xxii. 15, seq.

7. *His mouth is full of cursing.* Profaneness; blasphemy against God. In the former verse the writer had described the feelings of the *heart;* he now proceeds to specify the open *acts* of the wicked. The meaning is, that the wicked man, as here described, was one who was full of imprecation, swearing, execration;—a *profane* man;—a man who, whatever was his belief about God, would constantly call upon his name, and imprecate his wrath on himself or others. An atheist, strange as it may seem, is as likely to make a frequent use of the name of God, and to call on him, as other men;—just as profane men, who have no belief in the Saviour, swear by Jesus Christ. This passage seems to be referred to by the apostle Paul in Rom. iii. 14, not as a direct quotation, as if the psalmist referred to the point which he was arguing, but as language which expressed the idea that the apostle wished to convey. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *And deceit.* Marg., as in Heb., *deceits.* The meaning is, that he was false and treacherous; and perhaps also that his treachery and fraud were accompanied with the solemn sanction of an oath, or an appeal to God, as is likely to be the case among fraudulent and dishonest men. ¶ *And fraud.* The word here used—תֹךְ, *toch*—is now commonly supposed to mean rather *oppression* or *violence.* See Gesenius,

8 He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages; in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes [1] are privily set against the poor.

[1] *hide themselves.*

9 He lieth in wait [2] secretly, as

[2] *in the secret places.*

Lex. When this is attributed to his *mouth*, it means that what he says—what he requires—what he commands, is unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive. ¶ *Under his tongue.* Perhaps alluding to the serpent, whose poison is concealed at the root of the fang or tooth, and therefore under the tongue. The meaning is, that beneath what the wicked say, though it seems to be harmless, as the tongue of the serpent does, yet there lies mischief and iniquity, as the poison is hidden beneath the serpent's tongue. ¶ Is *mischief.* The word here used means properly labour, toil; then trouble, vexation, sorrow. The meaning here seems to be that there lies under the tongue that which *gives* or *causes* distress; to wit, wrong-doing; injustice to others. ¶ *And vanity.* Marg., *iniquity.* This expresses the idea in the original word. Whatever he *says* is evil, and is fitted to produce trouble and sorrow, as the concealed poison in the mouth of the serpent causes pain and death.

8. *He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages.* As robbers do, who hide themselves in the vicinity of villages, that they make a sudden descent upon them in the silence of the night, or that they may seize and rob the inhabitants as they go forth in the morning to attend their flocks to the pastures, or to labour in the fields. The word rendered *villages* means properly an enclosure, as a court before a building; and then a village or hamlet, farm-buildings, or farm hamlets, usually erected around an open space; and it is then used to denote the encampment of nomadic tribes, who usually pitch their tents in a circle so as to form an enclosure, Gen. xxv. 16; Isa. xlii. 11. In the neighbourhood of such places,—in the thickets, bushes, or ravines, that might be near such encampments or enclosures,—robbers would naturally secrete themselves, that they might fall upon them suddenly, or that they might seize any one who left the village or encampment for any purpose. So Frazer remarks in his Travels in Chorasan, i. 437: "When the Turkomans design to fall upon a village, they take a position near it in the rear, until in the morning the unsuspecting inhabitants drive out their herds, or leave the villages for some other purpose, and then they suddenly fall upon them." De Wette, *in loc.* ¶ *In the secret places doth he murder the innocent.* From these retreats he suddenly falls upon those who are unsuspicious, and who have done him no wrong. The word *innocent* here does not mean *sinless* in the absolute sense, but it means that they were innocent so far as the robber was concerned. They had done *him* no wrong; they had given him no occasion to make war upon them. ¶ *His eyes are privily set.* Marg., *hide themselves.* The Hebrew word means to hide, to conceal; to lay up in private; to hoard; to keep back; to hold back, etc. Here it means to conceal, to lurk in ambush; and the idea is that his eyes will secretly watch, or keep a look-out for them; that is, that his eyes, or that he himself will be concealed, that he may observe the goings of those whom he intends to make his prey. ¶ *Against the poor.* Or, the wretched, the afflicted, the defenceless. The meaning is, that instead of being a helper of the poor and wretched, he is disposed to take every advantage of them, and deprive them of all their rights and comforts.

9. *He lieth in wait secretly.* Marg., *in the secret places.* See Notes on ver. 8. The object here is merely to illustrate the thought in the previous verse, by an allusion to a lion and a

a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

10 [1]He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall [2]by his strong ones.

[1] *breaketh himself.* [2] Or, *into his strong parts.*

hunter. ¶ *As a lion in his den.* As a lion crouches down in his den, ready to spring upon his prey. That is, the lion is concealed, but is on the look out, and when his prey passes near his den, he suddenly springs upon it and secures it. So it is with the wicked man. He carefully lays his plans. He conceals his purposes. He is himself hidden, or his plans are all hidden. Suddenly he springs upon his victim, who is taken by surprise and has no power of defence or escape. The purpose here is not so much to describe the wicked man *as* a literal robber, as to *compare* the *conduct* of the wicked *with* that of a robber,—one who, like a lion or a hunter, lies concealed until his victim is seen. This will describe the conduct of a large class of men—men who secretly lay plans of seduction, villany, and fraud, and who spring suddenly upon their victims when there is no hope of escape. ¶ *He lieth in wait to catch the poor.* The helpless and defenceless. ¶ *He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.* As a hunter does the wild beast. Here the same thought is presented under a new image—that of a hunter. He lays his snare, gin, or pit-fall, and when the animal is allured into it, he springs the net suddenly on him, or the animal sinks into the pit, and is secured. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15; ix. 15.

10. *He croucheth.* Marg., *breaketh himself.* Coverdale, "Then smiteth he, then oppresseth he." Prof. Alexander, "And bruised he will sink." Horsley, "And the overpowered man submits." Luther, "He slays, and thrusts down, and presses to the earth the poor with power." This variety of interpretation arises from some ambiguity in regard to the meaning of the original. The word rendered *croucheth*—וְדָכָה, in Chetib or the text,—is in the Keri or margin, יִדְכֶּה, "and crushed, he sinks down." There is some uncertainty about the form in which the word is used, but it is certain that it does not mean, as in our translation, *he croucheth.* The word דָּכָה, *dachah*, properly means to be broken in pieces, to be crushed; and this idea runs through all the forms in which the word occurs. The true idea, it seems to me, is that this does not refer to the wicked man, but to his victim or victims, represented here by a word in the collective singular; and the meaning is that such a victim, crushed and broken down, sinks under the power of the persecutor and oppressor. "And the crushed one sinks down." ¶ And *humbleth himself.* The word here used—יָשׁוֹחַ, *yâshoahh*, — from שׁוּחַ, *shuahh* — means to sink down; to settle down. Here it means to sink down as one does who is overcome or oppressed, or who is smitten to the earth. The idea is, that he is crushed or smitten by the wicked, and sinks to the ground. ¶ *That the poor may fall.* Rather, as in the original, "and the poor fall;" that is, they *do* fall. The idea is, that they do in fact fall by the arm of the persecutor and oppressor who treads them down. ¶ *By his strong ones.* Marg., "Or, *into his strong parts.*" The text here best expresses the sense. The reference is to the strong ones—the followers and abettors of the "wicked" here referred to—his train of followers. The allusion seems to be to this wicked man represented as the head or leader of a band of robbers or outlaws,—strong, athletic men engaged under him in committing robbery on the unprotected. See vers. 8, 9. Under these strong men the poor and the unprotected fall, and are crushed to the earth. The mean-

11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: [u] he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

[u] Ecc. viii. 11.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift

ing of the whole verse, therefore, may be thus expressed: "And the crushed one sinks down, and the poor fall under his mighty ones." The word rendered *poor* is in the plural, while the verb *fall* is in the singular; but this construction is not uncommon when the verb precedes. Nordheimer, *Heb. Gram*, § 759, i., *a*. The word rendered *poor* means the wretched or the afflicted, and refers here to those who were unprotected,—the victims of oppression and robbery. The following account of the condition of Palestine at the present time will illustrate the passage here, and show how true the statements of the psalmist are to nature. It occurs in "The Land and the Book," by W. M. Thomson, D.D., Missionary in Syria. He is speaking of the sandy beach, or the sand hills, in the neighbourhood of Mount Carmel, and says, respecting these "sandy downs, with feathery reeds, running far inland, the chosen retreat of wild boars and wild Arabs,"—"The Arab robber lurks like a wolf among these sand heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveller, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about or lag behind, and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here,—Khaifa before, and Acre in the rear, and travellers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so." And then quoting the passage before us (vers. 8—10), he adds, "A thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travellers. You observe that all these people we meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Khaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way." Vol. i., pp. 487, 488.

11. *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.* That is, this is his practical, habitual feeling. He acts as if God had forgotten, or as if God takes no knowledge of what is occurring in the earth. Comp. ver. 6. ¶ *He hideth his face.* God has hidden his face; that is, he does not look on what is occurring. ¶ *He will never see it.* That is, he will never see what is done. It cannot be supposed that any man would deliberately *say* either that the memory of God has failed, or that he will not see what is done upon the earth, but the meaning is, that this is the practical feeling of the wicked man; he acts as if this were so. He is no more restrained in his conduct than he would be if this were his deliberate conviction, or than if he had settled it in his mind that God is regardless of human actions. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a correct description of the conduct of wicked men. If they deliberately believed that God was regardless of human conduct, if they were certain that he would not behold what is done, their conduct would not be different from what it is now. They do not act as if his eye were upon them; they are not restrained by any sense of his presence.

12. *Arise, O* LORD. See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. This commences the second part of the psalm, in which the author calls on God to remember those who were oppressed and wronged by the wicked. By suffering the wicked thus to carry on their plans, God *seemed* to be indifferent to human affairs, and the psalmist, therefore, invokes him to interpose, and to rescue the afflicted from their grasp. ¶ *O God, lift up thine hand.* As one does when he is about to strike, or to exert his power. The prayer is, that God would inter-

up thine hand: forget not the [1] humble.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*.

14 Thou hast seen *it*; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with thy hand: the

[1] Or, *afflicted*.

fere to put down the wicked. ¶ *Forget not the humble.* Marg., *afflicted.* The margin expresses the true sense. The idea is not that God would remember *humble* persons in the sense in which that word is now commonly used, but that he would remember those who were down-trodden, crushed, and afflicted. This is in accordance with the marginal reading in the Hebrew Bibles, which is now usually regarded as the more correct reading.

13. *Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?* That is, despise him; or treat him with contempt and disregard. On what ground is this done? How is it to be accounted for? What is the proper explanation of so strange a fact? It is to be observed here (*a*) that the psalmist assumes this to be a fact, that the wicked *do* thus contemn or despise God. Of this he had no doubt; of this there can be no doubt now. They act as if this were so; they often speak of him as if this were so. They pay no respect to his commands, to his presence, or to his character; they violate all his laws as if they were not worth regarding; they spurn all his counsels and entreaties; they go forward to meet him as if his wrath were not to be apprehended or dreaded. (*b*) So strange a fact, the psalmist says, ought to be accounted for. There must be some reason why it occurs; and what that reason is, is worth an earnest inquiry. It could not be possible to believe that man—the creature of God, and a creature so weak and feeble—*could* do it, unless the fact were so plain that it could not be denied. It is, then, worth inquiry to learn how so strange a fact can be accounted for; and the solution—the thing which will explain this, and which must be assumed to be true in order to explain it—is stated in the concluding part of the verse. ¶ *He hath said in his heart.* This expression is here repeated for the third time in the psalm. See vers. 6, 11. The idea is, that all this is the work *of the heart*, and indicates the state of the heart. It cannot be regarded as the dictate of the reason or the judgment; but it is to be traced to the wishes, the feelings, the desires, and is to be regarded as indicating the real condition of the human heart. A man habitually desires this; he practically persuades himself that this is so; he acts as if it were so. ¶ *Thou wilt not require it.* Thou wilt not require an account of it; thou wilt not inquire into it. The Hebrew is simply, "Thou wilt not seek;" and the idea is, that God would not make an investigation of the matter. This fact, the psalmist says, would account for the conduct of the wicked. This *is* the actual feeling of wicked men, that they are *not* to give account of their conduct, or that God will not be strict to mark their deeds. Men act *as if* they were not responsible to their Maker, and *as if* it were a settled point that he would never call them to account.

14. *Thou hast seen* it. Thou seest all. Though men act as if their conduct was not observed, yet thou art intimately acquainted with all that they do. The workers of iniquity cannot hide themselves. The idea here is, that although God *seemed* not to notice the conduct of the wicked, and though the wicked acted as if he did not, yet that all this was seen by God, and that he would deal with men according to justice and to truth. ¶ *For thou beholdest mischief.* All that is done on the earth, though perhaps in this case referring particularly to that which gave the psalmist trouble. ¶ *And spite.* The

poor [1] committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 [v] Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*: seek out his wickedness *till* [w] thou find none.

16 The LORD *is* King [x] for ever

[1] *leaveth.* [v] Psa. xxxvii. 17. [w] 2 Kings xxi. 12—15. [x] 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

word *spite* with us, though it originally denoted rancour, malice, ill-will, now denotes usually a less deliberate and fixed malice than is indicated by those words, but is used to denote a sudden fit of ill-will excited by temporary vexation. It relates to small subjects, and is accompanied with a desire of petty revenge, and implies that one would be gratified with the disappointment or misfortune of another. The word here, however, in the original, means anger, wrath, malice; and the idea is, that God had seen all the anger of the enemies of the psalmist. ¶ *To requite it with thy hand.* By thine own interposition or agency,—the *hand* being the instrument by which we accomplish anything. The idea is, that the psalmist felt assured that God would not pass this over. Though the wicked acted as if he did not see or regard their conduct, yet the psalmist felt assured that God would not be unmindful of it, but would, in due time, visit them with deserved punishment. ¶ *The poor committeth himself unto thee.* Marg., *leaveth.* The word rendered *poor* is the same as that which occurs in ver. 10. It means here those who are helpless and defenceless; the oppressed and the down-trodden. The word *committeth* or *leaveth* means that he leaves his cause with God; he trusts in his protection and interposition; he gives himself no anxiety as to the result. He knows that God *can* deliver him if he sees that it is best; and he is assured that God *will* do that which it is best should be done. ¶ *Thou art the helper of the fatherless.* That is, this is the general character of God,—the character in which he has revealed himself to man. Comp. Ex. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; Isa. i. 17; Ps. lxviii. 5; lxxxii. 3; Jer. xlix. 11; Hos. xiv. 3; Mal. iii. 5; James i. 27. The psalmist here refers to the *general character* of God as that in which all the oppressed, the crushed, the helpless may trust; and he mentions this particular case as one that best illustrated that character.

15. *Break thou the arm of the wicked.* The arm is the instrument by which we effect a purpose, and especially in wielding a sword or a spear, as in battle; and if the arm is broken, we are powerless. The psalmist, therefore, prays that God would render the wicked, in this respect, powerless. ¶ *And the evil* man. Of all the evil, or the wicked. In regard to the prayer here, see Notes on Ps. v. 10. ¶ *Seek out his wickedness* till *thou find none.* Till it is all punished; till there has been a full recompense. This is a wish that no wicked act of his should be forgotten; that exact justice should be rendered. If it is right to punish the wicked at all, it is right to deal with them just as they deserve; if *any* wickedness may properly be punished, all may be; and, whatever may occur, the sinner may be assured that he will not be punished merely for *a part* of his sins. If God punishes the wicked at all, there will be nothing left unpunished.

16. *The* LORD is *King for ever and ever.* That is, he reigns, and he will reign for ever. This is one of the instances which frequently occur in the Psalms, where, though there is a desponding spirit, or an apprehension of danger expressed in the beginning of the poem, it *ends* with the language of exultation and triumph. The psalmist speaks here as if what he had desired was actually accomplished, and as if the enemies that had encompassed him, and all the enemies of the Lord, were actually overthrown, and God now reigned supreme. He was

and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 LORD, thou hast heard [y] the desire of the humble: thou wilt [1] prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;

18 [z] To judge the fatherless and

[y] Isa. lxv. 24. [1] Or, *establish*. [z] Isa. xi. 4.

so confident that this would be so, that he speaks of it as if it were already done. Comp. Rom. iv. 17; see also Ps. vi. 8, 9; vii. 17; ix. 18. ¶ *The heathen are perished out of his land.* That is, this would so certainly occur that he might speak of it as if it were actually done. The word *heathen* here refers to the enemies of God and of his cause, who are the principal subjects of the psalm. Comp. Ps. ix. 5. The *land*, here, refers to the land of Palestine, or the Holy Land, regarded as a land sacred to God, or in the midst of which he himself dwelt.

17. LORD, *thou hast heard the desire of the humble.* Their desire or their prayer that thou wouldst interpose in their behalf in the time of danger, and rescue them. Comp. Ps. vi. 8, 9. The word *humble* here refers to those who were poor, down-trodden, oppressed; and the original reference is, doubtless, to the psalmist himself, and to his friends. He was so certain that God would interpose, he had such assurance that his prayer would be answered, that his mind was perfectly calm. ¶ *Thou wilt prepare their heart.* Marg., "or, *establish*." The margin seems most accurately to express the meaning of the original word—תָּכִין, *tâchin*. The idea is, that he would settle or confirm their heart; that is, that he would dispel their fears and allay their apprehensions by the assurances of his favour, and by his gracious interposition. They had been full of apprehension and alarm, but the assurances of the Divine favour would establish their hearts and give them peace. ¶ *Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* Another form of expressing assurance of the same thing. The idea is, that he would incline his ear, or make it attentive to the cry of his afflicted people.

18. *To judge the fatherless.* That is, to *vindicate* the orphan; to rescue him from the hand of those who would oppress and wrong him. In other words, the psalmist prays that God would manifest himself in his real and proper character as the vindicator of the fatherless (see Notes on ver. 14), or of those who are represented by the fatherless—the feeble and the helpless. ¶ *And the oppressed.* Those who are down-trodden, crushed, and wronged. See Notes on Ps. ix. 9. ¶ *That the man of the earth.* Literally, "the man *from* the earth;" *i. e.*, that man springing from the earth, or created of the dust (Gen. ii. 7)—man frail, short-lived, feeble—should no more set up an unjust authority, trample on the rights of his fellow-worms, or suppose that he is superior to his fellow-creatures. ¶ *May no more oppress.* Marg., *terrify*. The original word means properly to terrify, to make afraid; that is, in this place, to terrify by his harsh and oppressive conduct. It is to be observed here that the original word—אָרִיץ, *aratz*—has a very close resemblance in sound to the word rendered *earth*—אֶרֶץ, *eretz*—and that this is commonly supposed to be an instance of the figure of speech called *paronomasia*, when the words have the same sound, but are of different significations. It is not certain, however, that there is in this case any *designed* resemblance, but it is rather to be supposed that it was accidental. In regard to the *prayer* in this verse, it may be proper to observe that there is always occasion to utter it, and will be until the Gospel shall pervade the hearts of all men. One of the most common forms of wickedness in our world is *oppression*—the oppression of the fatherless, of the poor, of the dependent—the oppression of the subjects of government, and the oppression of the slave. One of the most affecting things in regard to this is,

the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more [1] oppress.

[1] Or, *terrify*.

that it is done by a man made "from the earth,"—a child of dust—a creature composed of clay—of no better mould than others, and soon to return *to* the dust from which he was taken. Yet frail and weak man strives to feel that he is better than those clothed with a skin not coloured like his own, or those born in a more humble condition of life; and, in defiance of all the laws of God, and all the rights of his fellow-men, he crushes and grinds them to the earth. For such sins God will interpose, and he will yet show himself to be the helper of the fatherless and the oppressed. May He hasten the day when oppression and wrong shall cease in the world!

PSALM XI.

§ 1. *Author of the psalm.*—This psalm is ascribed to David, both in the title and in the location which it has among the Psalms. There is nothing in the psalm to make this doubtful, and indeed its structure is so much in accordance with those usually ascribed to David, as to leave no doubt as to its authorship. "The very difficulties of the psalm," says Prof. Alexander, "are proofs of its antiquity, and strong corroborations of the title which ascribes it to David."

§ 2. *Occasion on which it was composed.*—Of this there is no intimation in the title, or in the psalm itself. There is no special reference to any of the incidents of David's life, although some of the thoughts or images were suggested apparently by the recollection of what occurred in the persecutions of Saul or the rebellion of Absalom. Different occasions in the life of David have indeed been referred to as having led to the composition of the psalm. Venema supposes that it was composed when David was in the wilderness of Ziph, and when, betrayed by the inhabitants of the wilderness, and pursued by Saul, his friends began to advise him to seek a place of safety by flight, 1 Sam. xxiii. 14–23. This gave occasion, Venema supposes, for his expressing the sentiment—which is the leading sentiment in the psalm—that when our affairs seem to be hopeless, we are not to be in despair, but are to put our trust still in God. Others have supposed that the psalm was composed when he was in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii.), and in imminent danger of his life from the persecutions of Saul. A more plausible opinion is that of Amyraldus, who supposes that it was composed when David was in the court of Saul, and when he may have been advised to leave the court—a place of danger—and flee to a place of safety. But it cannot be determined with certainty on which of these occasions the psalm was composed, if it was on either of them. All that is apparent in the psalm itself is, that it was when the author was in danger, and when some of his friends advised him to seek safety by flight, ver. 1. Instead of doing this, David determined to remain where he was, and to put his trust in God, with the belief that he would interpose and deliver him.

§ 3. *Contents of the psalm.*—This psalm may be properly regarded as divided into two parts:

I. The counsel of some timid and fearful friends to the writer, in the circumstances of danger in which he was, to make his escape, and to seek safety by flight, vers. 1–3. They advise him to flee as a bird to the mountain; that is, to flee to a place of security while he could, for he seems to have been surrounded by enemies. The *arguments* by which they enforced this counsel seem to be referred to in vers. 2, 3, and were these: (*a*) that the wicked had made preparations to destroy him, for their bows and arrows were ready, ver. 2; and (*b*) that the condition of affairs was as if the very *foundations* were destroyed; that there was nothing to rest on; and that all his hopes, in his present condition, must be swept away, ver. 3. In these circumstances all his hopes of safety, in their apprehension, was in flight.

II. The views which the author of the psalm entertained on the subject, in reply to this, vers. 4–7. He had unwavering confidence in God; he did not despair; he believed that God would protect him; he believed that the object of God in permitting this was to try the righteous, and that in due time he would come forth and rain snares, fire, and brimstone, upon the ungodly. The state of mind thus

PSALM XI.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David.

IN the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?

2 For, lo, the wicked [a] bend *their* bow, they make ready their

[a] Psa. lxiv. 2—4.

evinced, is that of firmness in trying circumstances; steady confidence in God when things seem to be most adverse; and an assured belief that God will in due time rescue those who put their trust in him. It is the manifestation of firmness against the counsels of the timid; the language of unshaken trust in God when the fearful and unbelieving despair.

For the meaning of the title, see Notes on Ps. v.

1. *In the* LORD *put I my trust.* This, in general, expresses the state of mind of the author—a state of feeling which runs through the entire psalm. It is designed to be an answer to the counsel which others had been giving him to escape, and it implies that he was determined at that time, and always, to put his trust in God. They advised him to flee. In the existing circumstances he felt that that would have implied a want of confidence in God. He determined, therefore, to maintain his present position, and to rely upon the interposition of God in due time. ¶ *How say ye to my soul.* How say ye to *me*—the soul being put for the person himself. *Why* do you say this to me? how can you give me such counsel, as if I were to run away from danger, and to put no trust in God? He seems to have supposed that such an act of flight would have been construed by his enemies, and by the enemies of religion, as evidence that he had no faith or confidence in God. Such circumstances often occur in the world; and when that would be the *fair* and *natural* construction of one's conduct, the path of duty is plain. We are to remain where we are; we are boldly to face the danger, and commit the whole matter to God. ¶ *Flee* as *a bird to your mountain.* This implies that it was supposed there was no longer any *safety* where he then was. The use of the plural number here—"Flee *ye*,"—by a change not uncommon in the Hebrew writings—seems designed to refer to the whole *class* of persons in those circumstances. The mind turns from his own particular case to that of others in the same circumstances; and the language may be designed to imply that this was the *usual* counsel given to such persons; that, on the same principle on which they now advised flight in this particular case, they would also advise flight in all similar cases. That is, they would counsel persons to flee to a place of safety when they were in danger of their life from persecution. This is the common counsel of the world; this would be the ordinary teaching of human prudence. The mountains in Palestine were regarded as places of safety, and were the common refuge of those who were in danger. In their caves and fastnesses, and on their heights, those who were in danger found security, for they could there hide themselves, or could more easily defend themselves, than they could in the plains and in the vallies. Hence they became the place of retreat for robbers and banditti, as well as for the persecuted. The allusion to the *bird* here does not imply that birds sought a refuge in the mountains, and that he was to resemble them in this respect; but the point of the comparison turns on the *rapidity* with which this refuge should be sought: "Fly to the mountains as *swiftly* as a bird flies from danger." Comp. Matt. xxiv. 16; Judges vi. 2; Heb. xi. 38.

2. *For, lo, the wicked bend* their *bow.* These are to be regarded as the words of the persons referred to in the previous verse, who had advised the persecuted psalmist to flee to the mountains. In this verse reasons are suggested for that advice. The reasons are, that the enemy was pre-

arrow upon the string, that they may [1] privily shoot at the upright in heart.

[1] *in darkness.*

3 If the foundations [b] be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

[b] 2 Tim. ii. 19.

paring for an attack, and that at an unexpected moment the attack would be made unless he should effect his escape. Apprised of the danger, he might now make good his escape, and avoid the peril which was impending. The common weapon in war, as in hunting, was the bow and arrow. The process of preparing for the use of the bow consisted in *bending* it, and properly adjusting the arrow. The Hebrew word used here is *tread;* "the wicked *tread upon* the bow;" that is, with a view to bend it. The bow was made of steel, or strong wood, or pieces of ivory framed together, and it often required great strength—beyond the strength of the arm—to bend it so as to adjust the string. Hence the *foot* was placed upon the centre, and the two ends drawn near to each other. ¶ *They make ready their arrow upon the string.* Hebrew, "they *fit* or *fix* the arrow upon the string." That is, they place the end of the arrow in the proper place upon the string of the bow. ¶ *That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.* Marg., as in the Hebrew, *in darkness.* That is, that they may do it secretly or treacherously. They do not intend to do it in open day, or (as we should say) "in a fair fight;" but they mean to do it when their victim is not aware of their design. The phrase, "the upright in heart," may either denote their own conviction that those whom they designed so to attack were upright in heart—thus knowing that they were innocent; or it may be a statement of the advisers in the case, that those whom they counselled *were* thus upright—a statement on their part that the attack was made on the righteous. The latter is probably the true construction.

3. *If the foundations be destroyed.* These are still to be regarded as the words of the psalmist's advisers; or as an argument why he should make his escape. The word "foundations," here, refers to those things on which society rests, or by which social order is sustained—the great principles of truth and righteousness that uphold society, as the foundations on which an edifice rests uphold the building. The reference is to a destruction of those things in a community, when truth is no longer respected; when justice is no longer practised; when fraud and violence have taken the place of honesty and honour; when error prevails; when a character for integrity and virtue affords no longer any security. This is supposed to be the case in the circumstances referred to in the psalm, when there was no respect paid to truth and justice, and when the righteous, therefore, could find no security. It is under these circumstances the advice is given (ver. 1), that the righteous should seek safety in flight. ¶ *What can the righteous do?* What source of safety or confidence has he? His trust for his own safety, and for the good of society, has always been in the prevalence of just principles, and he has no other resource. Whatever others may do; whatever reliance *they* may place on such things, *he* can have no confidence in fraud, dishonesty, and error—in secret machinations and plans of treachery and deceit. *His* reliance is, and must be, in the prevalence of just principles; in the observance of law; in the diffusion of truth; in plans and deeds which are honourable and pure. When these no longer prevail, the argument is, there is nothing on which he can repose confidence in executing the plans on which his heart is fixed, and his proper course would be to flee (ver. 1). Part of this is true; part not. It *is* true that all the hope of the righteous

4 The LORD *is* in his [c] holy temple, the LORD's throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

[c] Hab. ii. 20.

5 The LORD trieth the right-

is in the prevalence of principles of truth and justice, and that for the success of the objects nearest to his heart, whether of a private or public nature, he has no other resource or hope; but it is *not* always true, even when injustice, fraud, and error prevail, that he should withdraw from society and seek his safety in flight, and leave the world to its own course. His presence may be the very thing to counteract this; his duty may be to remain and face the evil, and to endeavour to secure a better state of things. So the psalmist understood in his case.

4. *The* LORD is *in his holy temple.* Heb., "Jehovah is in the temple of his holiness." That is, he is in heaven, regarded as his temple or dwelling-place. This is the answer of the psalmist to the suggestions of his advisers that he should flee from danger. The answer is, in substance, that he had nothing to fear; that he had a protector in heaven; and that he might appeal to Him for defence. The idea is, that God, the protector of the righteous, is always in the heavens; that his throne is always accessible; and that to it the persecuted may come, and may *always* be safe. ¶ *The* LORD'S *throne* is *in heaven.* God is a king, ruling the universe. As such, the seat of his power or dominion is represented as in heaven, where he administers his government. That throne is fixed, and the affairs of his universe will be administered with justice. The righteous, therefore, may hope in his protection, and need not flee when the wicked assail them. The *idea* here is that of unwavering confidence in God as sitting upon the throne of the universe, and as administering its affairs with justice and truth. Comp. Isa. lxvi. 1, "Heaven is my throne." See Notes on that verse. ¶ *His eyes behold.* He sees everything in all parts of his vast empire, and therefore he knows all the purposes of the wicked, and all the wants of the righteous. The thought here, as one imparting a sense of safety, is, that God *sees* us. He is not ignorant of what our enemies are doing, and he is not ignorant of what we need. If he were, the case would be different. We might then despair of safety, and feel that our enemies could overcome and destroy us. It is much, in the trials of life, to have this assurance—this constant feeling—that God *sees* us. He knows our condition, our wants, our dangers; he knows all that our enemies are doing—all their machinations against us. Knowing all this, we may be assured that he will interpose when it is best that he should interpose, and that he will suffer nothing to come upon us which it is not best that he should permit. When evil befals us, therefore, it does not come because God does not know it, or because he could not prevent it, but because, seeing it all, he judges that it is best that it should thus occur. Comp. Gen. xvi. 13. ¶ *His eyelids try.* That is, they prove, penetrate into, as if by seeing through them. The "eyelids" here are synonymous with the eyes. The form of the language is varied in accordance with a custom common in Hebrew, and there is attributed here to the eyelids what properly belongs to the eyes—the power of seeing. ¶ *The children of men.* All men, good and bad. He knows them all—all their purposes, their designs, their wishes, their dangers. He knows, therefore, what our enemies are doing; he knows what are our perils; and we may safely leave our cause with him. We should not, therefore, listen to the counsel which advises us to flee (ver. 1), but should rather put our trust in him who dwells in the heavens.

5. *The* LORD *trieth the righteous.* That is, he *proves* them, searches them, tests the reality of their piety.

eous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain [1] snares, fire [d] and brimstone, and an [2] horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.

[1] Or, *quick burning coals.* [d] Gen. xix. 24.
[2] Or, *burning.*

His dealings with them are such as to test the genuineness of their religion, and are designed to show their sincerity and the real power of their religious principles. It is not for the purpose of destroying them, or punishing them, that he deals with them as he does, but it is to show the reality of their attachment to him. This language seems here to be used to show the feeling of the persecuted and afflicted author of the psalm. He understood the reason why these calamities were suffered to come upon him,—to wit, as a trial of his faith;—and therefore it was his duty to remain and bear these troubles, and not to attempt to escape from them by flight. He says, therefore, that these troubles in the case of the righteous were in strong contrast with the purpose of the Divine dealings towards the wicked, on whom God would "rain" snares, fire, and brimstone. In their case his judgments were for the purpose of punishing and destroying; in the case of the righteous it was to "try" them, or to test the reality of their religion. ¶ *But the wicked.* The wicked in general. *All* the wicked. ¶ *And him that loveth violence.* Referring particularly here to those who were engaged in persecuting him who was the author of this psalm. They were contemplating acts of violence towards him (ver. 2); he says that all such persons were the objects of the Divine displeasure, and would be appropriately punished. ¶ *His soul hateth;* i. e. *he* hates. God is often spoken of in language appropriate to man; and he is here referred to as having a *soul*,—as he is elsewhere as having eyes, hands, or feet. The meaning is, that all such persons were the objects of the Divine abhorrence, and that the Divine dealings with them were not, as with the righteous, to *try* them, but to *punish* and *destroy* them. Knowing this, the persecuted author of the psalm, instead of fleeing, calmly committed himself and his cause to God.

6. *Upon the wicked.* Upon all the wicked. ¶ *He shall rain.* He shall pour down as in a furious tempest. ¶ *Snares.* It seems rather incongruous to speak of *raining down* "snares," — understanding by the word *snares*, as it is used with us, that which *entangles*, as the snares by which we catch a bird, or by which a wild animal is taken. Comp. Notes on Job xviii. 8—10. The word here used, however, seems to refer to anything by which one is taken in his career or course, or is involved in difficulties; and the meaning is, that God would arrest or seize upon the wicked, as a wild beast is secured by the snares or the toils of the hunter. By their being sent down as in a "rain," is denoted that such means of their arrest and punishment would exist *in abundance*, so that they could not escape. ¶ *Fire and brimstone.* There is probably an allusion here to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. xix. 24. As those cities were eminent for their wickedness, and were destroyed on account of their guilt, they furnished an illustration of the manner in which God would treat the wicked in all future times. As *they* were destroyed on account of their wickedness, so will all the wicked be destroyed. ¶ *And an horrible tempest.* As a furious blast of wind sweeps away houses and trees, spreading wide desolation, so will the wicked be swept away by the manifestation of the wrath of God. ¶ This shall be *the portion of their cup.* That is, this shall be what they shall *drink*. See Notes on Isa. li. 17. The idea is, that the Lord holds out to them a *cup* for them to drink—a cup containing a deadly mixture. The allusion

7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

is to the mode of administering punishment by a poisonous draught—not an unfrequent mode of punishment in ancient times. The idea in the whole verse is, that the wicked would be destroyed, and that, therefore, there was nothing ultimately to be apprehended from them. God would protect his own friends, and would destroy all those that sought their hurt. In these circumstances the righteous should confide in him as their protector, and not "flee."

7. *For the righteous* LORD *loveth righteousness.* This would be more correctly rendered, "For Jehovah is righteous; he loves righteousness." The idea is, that God *is* himself righteous, and consequently he loves those who are righteous. He may be confided in, therefore, by the righteous as their friend, and being under his protection they have nothing to fear. ¶ *His countenance doth behold the upright.* The word rendered "countenance" is, in the Hebrew, in the plural number;—literally, "his *faces*." It is not easy to account for this use of the plural, though it is common in the Scriptures. There *may* be an allusion to the fact that man seems to have two faces—one on the right side, and one on the left, two eyes, two cheeks, two nostrils, etc., as if made up of two persons. Applied to God, it has no other signification than it has when applied to man; nor should we seek to find anything mystical in the fact that the plural form is used. The term here, like the eyelids in ver. 6, is equivalent to *eyes*, since the most remarkable feature of the countenance is the *eyes;* and the idea is, that God *looks upon* the upright; that is, he sees their dangers and their wants; he looks upon them with favour and affection. Being thus constantly under his eye, and being objects of his favourable regard, they can have nothing to fear; or, in other words, they are safe. This, then, is the argument of the righteous man, in reply to the suggestion (ver. 1) that he should "*flee*" from danger. The argument is, that God would be his defender, and that he might safely rely on His protection. The wicked have everything to fear; the righteous, nothing. The one is never safe; the other, always. The one will be delivered out of all his troubles; the end of the other can be only ruin.

PSALM XII.

This psalm purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him. On what occasion it was composed is now unknown, and there is nothing in the psalm itself to enable us to decide. Some have supposed that it was written in view of the persecution of David by Saul; and others, that it was in view of the rebellion of Absalom. There is nothing in the psalm, however, which shows that it has any *special* reference to those persecutions or troubles; nothing which might not have been uttered if those troubles had never occurred. All the expressions in the psalm are of a general character, and seem rather to refer to a prevailing state of iniquity than to any particular manifestation of wickedness as pertaining to the psalmist himself.

The psalm undoubtedly *does* refer to prevailing iniquity, and it is not difficult to determine to what *form* of iniquity it refers. It was a general failure of fidelity among good men; a general withdrawal from active duties of such men as had before been found faithful; a want of that firmness and zeal which it was proper to expect from those who professed to be good men. Particularly it refers to prevailing modes of *speech* among those from whom it was right to expect better things:—a condition in which there was a want of seriousness and sincerity in conversation; in which flattery abounded; in which double meanings in conversation were common; in which promises solemnly made could not be relied on; and in which there was, in consequence, great wrong done to the poor and the unsuspecting—those who, on account of their ignorance and their unsuspicious nature, were greatly injured by putting confidence in such

PSALM XII.

To the chief Musician upon [1] Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

HELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

[1] *the eighth*, Psa. vi., *title*.

promises and assurances. In this state of things the psalmist felt that it was proper to call on God to protect those who were exposed to such wrongs.

The psalm, therefore, is composed of these parts:—

I. A statement of the prevailing condition of things, as a reason why it was proper for God to interpose, vers. 1, 2.

II. The fact that the Lord would interpose in such cases, and would cut off this class of persons, vers. 3-5.

III. The strong contrast between the words of the Lord and the language which was then in prevalent use, ver. 6. The words of the Lord were *pure;* pure as silver tried by the severest tests of fire.

IV. A deep conviction on the part of the psalmist that God *would* be the protector of those who were thus exposed to injury and wrong; particularly he would keep them from the purposes of such a generation for ever, ver. 7.

V. The closing verse, "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" (ver. 8), seems to be but the carrying out of the idea of the Divine protection in the psalm: "Let the wicked walk about, therefore, on every side when vile men are exalted to power; for God is the protector of his people, and all such men are under his control." Or it may be the statement of a *fact* that wickedness *did* abound, or that men *seemed* to be unrestrained when wicked men were in power, though with the idea that God saw them, and would so check and restrain them that the injured and the wronged would be protected.

The *title* to the psalm—"To the chief Musician upon Sheminith"—is the same as that of the sixth Psalm, except that the words "On Neginoth," used there, are here omitted. See Notes on that psalm.

1. *Help*, LORD. Heb., "Save, JEHOVAH." The idea is that there was no human help, and, therefore, the Divine help is implored. The psalmist saw that those on whom reliance was usually placed for the promotion of the cause of truth and virtue now failed, and hence he invites the Divine interposition. ¶ *For the godly man.* The word here used properly denotes the *merciful* man—חָסִיד, *khasid.* It is a term applied to the righteous, because it is a prominent trait in the character of a pious man that he *is* merciful, kind, benignant. Hence the general character is often denoted by the special characteristic; in the same way as we speak of a pious man as a *good* man, a *just* man, a *righteous* man. The idea suggested by the use of the term here is, that it is *always* a characteristic of a pious man that he is merciful or benignant. Comp. Ps. iv. 3; xxxii. 6, where the same word is rendered *godly;*—Ps. xxx. 4; xxxi. 23; xxxvii. 28; l. 5; lii. 9; lxxix. 2; lxxxv. 8, where it is rendered *saints;*—and Deut. xxxiii. 8; Ps. xvi. 10; lxxxvi. 2; lxxxix. 19, where it is rendered *holy.* ¶ *Ceaseth.* The word here used—גָּמַר, *gamar*—means properly to *bring* to an end; to complete; to perfect. Hence it means to *come* to an end, to cease, to fail. *Gesenius.*—This might occur either by their being cut off by death; or by their ceasing to exert their influence in favour of religion; that is, by a general prevalence of wickedness among those who professed to be the friends of God. The latter seems to be the meaning here, since, in the following verses, the psalmist proceeds to specify the manner in which they "*fail,*" not by death, but by speaking vanity, falsehood, and flattery. That is, their conduct was such that their influence *failed,* or was *lost* to the community. No reliance could be placed on them, and, therefore, the psalmist so earnestly calls on God for his interposition. The idea is, that when men professing religion become conformed to the world,—when they live like other men,—when they cease

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips, *and* with [1] a double heart, do they speak.

[1] *an heart and an heart.*

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh [2] proud [c] things;

[2] *great.*

[c] 1 Sam. ii. 3; Dan. vii. 8, 25.

to exert an influence in favour of piety,—when they fall into habits of sin, it is a time to call on God with special earnestness for his aid. Often such conduct on the part of the professed friends of religion makes such an appeal to God more proper than even the death of good men does, for, in the latter case, their influence is simply *withdrawn;* in the former, not only is this influence which they *might* exert lost to the church, but there is a positive bad influence to be counteracted. The fall of a professor of religion into sin is a greater loss to the church than his death would be. ¶ *For the faithful.* Those who profess *faith;* those who are bound by their vows *to be* faithful to God and to his cause. The word is equivalent to *the believing*, and is properly expressive of trust or faith in God. ¶ *Fail from among the children of men.* Fail, as above noted, by their misconduct; by being false to the trust committed to them.

2. *They speak vanity.* This is a statement of the *manner* in which the "godly" and the "faithful" fail, as stated in ver. 1. One of the ways was that there was a disregard of truth; that no confidence could be placed on the statements of those who professed to be pious; that they dealt falsely with their neighbours. The word *vanity* here is equivalent to *falsehood.* What they spoke was a vain and empty thing, instead of being the truth. It had no *reality*, and could not be depended on. ¶ *Every one with his neighbour.* In his statements and promises. No reliance could be placed on his word. ¶ With *flattering lips.* Heb., "Lips of *smoothness.*" The verb from which the word here used is derived—חָלַק, *khalak*—means properly to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth; then, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does, as with a plane; and then, *to make things smooth with the tongue*, that is, *to flatter.* See Ps. v. 9; Prov. v. 3; xxvi. 28; xxviii. 23; xxix. 5. The meaning is, that no confidence could be placed in the statements made. There was no certainty that they were founded on truth; none that they were not intended to deceive. Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess,—usually with some sinister or base design. ¶ And *with a double heart.* Marg., as in Heb., *a heart and a heart;* that is, as it were, with two hearts, one that gives utterance to the words, and the other that retains a different sentiment. Thus, in Deut. xxv. 13, the phrase in Hebrew, *a stone and a stone* means, as it is translated, "divers weights"—one stone or weight to buy with, and another to sell with. So the flatterer. He has one heart to give utterance to the words which he uses towards his neighbour, and another that conceals his real purpose or design. No confidence, therefore, could be placed in such persons. Comp. Notes on Job xxxii. 22.

3. *The* LORD *shall cut off.* This might be rendered, "May the Lord cut off," implying a wish on the part of the psalmist that it might occur. But probably the common rendering is the correct one. It is the statement of a solemn truth, designed for warning, that all such persons would be punished. ¶ *All flattering lips.* The meaning is, that he will cut off all *persons* who use flattery; that is, he will cut them off from the favours which he will show to his own people, or will punish them. The word here used is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and

4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips *are* [1] our own: who *is* lord over us?

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD;

[1] *with us.*

derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Gen. xvii. 14; Lev. xvii. 10; xviii. 29; xx. 3, 6; *et sæpe.* ¶ And *the tongue that speaketh proud things.* That boasts, or is self-confident. For an example of this, see Isa. xxviii. 15; and compare the Notes on that passage. It was this disposition to falsehood, flattery, and boasting, which constituted the fact stated in ver. 1, that "godly" and "faithful" men—men on whom reliance might be placed, whose word might be trusted, and whose promised aid in the cause of truth might be depended on—had seemed to "fail" among men. That is, no such men could be found.

4. *Who have said.* Who habitually say. This does not mean that they had formally and openly said this—for none would be likely to do so—but that they had practically and really said this by their conduct. They acted as if it were the real principle on which they framed their lives, that they might use their tongues as they pleased. ¶ *With our tongue.* Literally, "as to," or "in respect to our tongue;" that is, by our tongue. It was by the tongue that they expected to accomplish their purposes. It was not by direct power, or by violence, but by the power of speech. ¶ *Will we prevail.* Literally, "We will do mightily;" that is, they would accomplish their purposes. They relied on the power of speech—on their ability in influencing others; in deceiving others; in persuading others to fall in with their plans. ¶ *Our lips* are *our own.* That is, we may use them as we please; no one has a right to control us in the use of what properly belongs to ourselves. It cannot be meant that they intended to assert this openly as a right, for there are perhaps none who will not admit in words that they are responsible for what they *say*, as well as for what they *do*. But their conduct was such that this was the fair interpretation to be placed on what they said. They *would* speak this if they openly professed and avowed what was their real opinion. ¶ *Who* is *lord over us?* That is, who has a right to control us in the case? There are many who practically avow this as a principle of conduct, and who seem to feel that they are not responsible for their *words*, however much they may admit their responsibility for their *actions*. There is usually a greater degree of recklessness among men in regard to their speech than in regard to their *conduct;* and many a man who would shrink from doing another wrong by an act of dishonesty in business, may be utterly reckless as to doing him wrong by an unkind remark.

5. *For the oppression of the poor.* That is, on account of the wrong done to the poor in the manner specified above—by the abuse of the power of speech. On account of the slanders uttered against them, or the frauds perpetrated on them by the abuse of this power. The reference is to the wrongs done when no confidence could be placed in men's words; when they uttered words of "vanity" and "flattery" (ver. 2); when promises were made only to be broken, and obligations assumed never to be fulfilled. In such a state of things the *poor* were the most likely to suffer. In performing service for others—in daily labour on a farm or in a mechanical employment—they would depend for support on the promises made by their employers; and when their pay was withheld, they and their families must suffer. Comp. James v. 4. Rich men, having other resources, would not thus suffer; but the poor must always suffer when there is in the

I will set *him* in safety *from him that* [1] puffeth at him.

6 The words of the LORD *are* [f] pure words; *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

[1] Or, *would ensnare him.*

[f] Psa. cxix. 140.

community a disregard of the obligation of promises. In like manner, the poor would be most likely to "be taken in" by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them. Other classes of the community would be on their guard; but the poor, unacquainted with the arts of cunning men, are always liable—though on a small scale, yet of importance to them—to be wronged by the false statements and promises of those against whom they can have no redress. ¶ *For the sighing of the needy*, etc. The word *needy* here is synonymous with *poor*. It refers to those in humble circumstances, who were peculiarly liable to be wronged by deceitful statements and promises. ¶ *I will set* him *in safety*. I will make him safe. I will save him from the evils which they thought to bring upon him. The general idea is, that God is the vindicator of the poor and the oppressed. ¶ From him that *puffeth at him*. Professor Alexander renders this, "I will place in safety him that shall pant for it." Gesenius renders it, "Whom they puffed at; *i. e.*, the oppressed." The language in the original is difficult. It may mean either "he pants for it," or "he puffs at him;" and the meaning can only be determined by the connexion. That would rather seem to be what is indicated in our common version; to wit, that the persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, *puffed at* them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless. By this construction, also, the connexion with the main statement will be best preserved—that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by *words*, by the breath of the mouth—thus indicating that by a *word* or a *breath* they could destroy them.

6. *The words of the* LORD. In contrast with the words of the persons referred to in vers. 2—4. Their words were vanity, flattery, and falsehood; and no reliance could be placed on them. In contrast with these words, the words of the Lord were pure. They *were* to be relied on. All his sayings were true and faithful. The design is to bring *his* words into contrast with the sayings of such men, and to show how much more safety there is in relying on his promises than on the promises made by such men. Man failed, but God would not. Reliance could not be placed on the words of even the professedly "godly" and "faithful" (ver. 1), but entire confidence might be placed in the words of Jehovah. All his words were true, pure, faithful, so that even when his own professed friends failed, and no confidence could be placed in them, yet there was still reason for unwavering confidence in God himself. ¶ Are *pure words*. That is, they are without any mixture of falsehood—for this idea is implied in the comparison which the psalmist makes when he says that they are like silver purified in the furnace, that is, from which all the dross has been removed. ¶ As *silver tried in a furnace of earth*. The word here rendered *furnace* properly means a *workshop*. Perhaps it corresponds nearly with our word *laboratory*, as the term is now used by chemists. It evidently refers to some place where the metal was tried and purified. The words rendered "of earth" literally mean "*on* the earth," or "*in* the earth." The language does not mean that the "furnace" was *made* of earth, as would seem to be implied in our version, but that the "furnace" or laboratory was erected *on* the

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve [1] them from this generation for ever.

[1] *him*, i.e., *every one of them.*

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest [2] men are exalted.

[2] *of the sons of men.*

earth, or *in* the earth. It may refer to something like a crucible placed on the ground, around which a fire of intense heat could be made. It is probable that some such structure would be made near the mines where ore was obtained, and that the ore would be thus purified from dross before it was removed. ¶ *Purified seven times.* By passing it seven times—that is, very often—through the fire. The word *seven* in the Scriptures denotes a complete or perfect number, and is often used to denote *frequency.* The idea here would seem to be that the process was repeated until the silver became entirely pure. The sense is, that the words of the Lord are *perfectly pure.* There is no admixture of falsehood in his statements; there is no deception in his promises; there is no flattery in what he says. This was the ground of confidence on the part of the psalmist—that while men (even those who professed to be good men) so failed that no reliance could be placed on their statements, the most perfect trust could be reposed on all the statements of God.

7. *Thou shalt keep them.* That is, the persons referred to in ver. 5—the poor and the needy who were suffering from the wrongs inflicted on them. The idea is, that God would guard and defend them. They were safe in his hands. Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 3—7. ¶ *From this generation.* This generation, or this race of detractors, flatterers, and oppressors. The idea is, that that entire generation was eminently wicked, and that none but God could deliver the poor and the needy from their designs. ¶ *For ever.* That is, *constantly,* or as long as they would need the Divine protection. God would not interpose and save them from the *present* trouble, and then leave them to the designs of their enemies, but he would *always* interpose as often as there was any need of his help. That is, they were now, and would be at all times, entirely safe. They had nothing to fear, for God was their refuge and their help.

8. *The wicked walk on every side.* Everywhere. They have full license, or seem to be wholly unrestrained. ¶ *When the vilest men are exalted.* Marg., "The vilest of the sons of men are exalted." This expression has been very variously translated. Bishop Horsley renders it, "When the scorn of the sons of men is exalted." De Wette, "They exalt themselves; terror to the sons of men." Luther, "Where such wicked people rule among the sons of men." Hengstenberg, "Like exaltation is disgrace to the sons of men." Prof. Alexander seems inclined to favour this last view. According to this interpretation, the meaning is, that "although the wicked are now in the ascendant, and the righteous are treated with contempt, this disgrace is really an exaltation, because only.....in man's judgment, not in God's, who will abundantly indemnify his people for the dishonour put upon them." The word rendered in our version "the vilest"—זְלוּת, *zullooth*—means, according to Gesenius, *trembling, terror.* It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The *verb* from which it is derived—זָלַל, *zalal*—means to shake, to tremble; then (as one shakes out, or casts away worthless things) to be vile, abject, despised, worthless. Perhaps, however, the common version expresses the idea more accurately than any of these proposed amendments. I would offer the following as a fair translation of the passage: "The wicked walk on every side; [it is] as the lifting up, or the exaltation of vileness among the sons of

PSALM XIII.

To the [1] chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

HOW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide [g] thy face from me?

[1] Or, *overseer.* [g] Psa. lxxxviii. 14.

men." That is, the state of things is as if the vilest were exalted, or were honoured. It seems to be the very exaltation of wickedness or depravity in the world. A state of things exists in which, from the prevalence of iniquity, the wicked seem to go unrestrained; in which no regard is paid to truth; in which falsehood and flattery abound; and it is *as if* honour were done to the worst forms of sin, and the most abandoned seem to be the most exalted. This appears to be the reason in the mind of the psalmist why the Divine interposition is necessary; with this idea the psalm commences, and with this it appropriately closes. There was a state of wide-spread depravity and successful iniquity, as if all honour were conferred on wicked and abandoned men, while the virtuous were oppressed and degraded. The psalm expresses *confidence* in God—confidence in his faithful word and promises; but the psalmist sees a state of things wherein it was eminently desirable that God should interpose, for the righteous seemed to have failed out of the earth, and the wicked seemed to be wholly in the ascendancy.

PSALM XIII.

This psalm consists properly of three parts:—

I. A complaint as of one who was forsaken by God; who was persecuted, and who saw no means of deliverance; who took counsel with his own heart how he might be delivered, but who found no way in which it could be done, vers. 1, 2.

II. An earnest prayer to God that He would interpose; that He would attend to the cry of the sufferer; that He would enlighten his mind; that his enemy might not be allowed to prevail against him, and rejoice over his fall, vers. 2, 3.

III. A cheerful confidence in God that he would grant this favour, and interpose in his behalf, vers. 5, 6.

This is entitled, "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to suppose that he was not the author. Yet there are in it no indications of the time when it was written or of the circumstances under which it was composed. It would *seem* to have been in a time of persecution, and it would be most natural to refer its composition to the persecutions which David experienced from Saul. Most of the Rabbinical writers understand it as referring to the whole Hebrew people, and as expressing their sentiments and feelings in times of persecution in general. Kimchi understands it as referring to the present exile and trials of the Jewish people. *De Wette.*—The psalm, though undoubtedly composed with reference to the peculiar circumstances and trials of the author, contains sentiments applicable at all times to believers, and may be regarded as exemplifying the way in which pious feeling expresses itself in times of persecution and trial. Individuals are not unfrequently in circumstances in which the language of this psalm exactly expresses the feelings of their hearts; and the psalm is of great and permanent value, therefore, in the church, as illustrating the fact that good men may sometimes *feel* desolate and forsaken, as if even God had left them; the fact that they will, in such circumstances, cry earnestly to God for his interposition; and the fact that they will have, and will manifest, as the result of such an appeal to God, a cheerful confidence in his protecting care.

The title—"To the chief Musician" (marg., *overseer*)—is the same as that prefixed to the fourth Psalm, with the omission of the words "*On Neginoth.*" See the Notes on that title.

1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O* LORD? Literally, *until when.* The psalmist breaks out into this cry *in the midst* of his troubles. He had apparently borne them as long as he could. It seemed as if they would never come to an end. We may presume that he had been patient and unmurmuring; that he had borne his trials long with the hope and belief that they would soon terminate; that he had waited patiently for deliver-

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

ance, uttering no words of complaint; but *now* he begins to despair. He feels that his troubles will never end. He sees no prospect of deliverance; no signs or tokens that God would interpose; and he breaks out, therefore, in this language of tender complaint, as if he was utterly forsaken, and would be for ever. The mind, even of a good man, is not unfrequently in this condition. He is borne down with troubles. He has no disposition to murmur or complain. He bears all patiently and long. He hopes for relief. He looks for it. But relief does not come; and it seems now that his troubles never *will* terminate. The darkness deepens; his mind is overwhelmed; he goes to God, and asks—not with complaining or murmuring, but with feelings bordering on despair—whether these troubles never will cease; whether he may never hope for deliverance. ¶ *For ever?* He had been forgotten so long, and there appeared to be so little prospect of deliverance, that it seemed as if God never would return and visit him with mercy. The expression denotes a state of mind on the verge of despair. ¶ *How long.* Referring to a second aspect or phase of his troubles. The first was, that he seemed to be *forgotten.* The second referred to here is, that God seemed to hide his face from him, and he asked how long *this* was to continue. ¶ *Wilt thou hide thy face from me.* Favour—friendship—is shown by turning the face benignantly towards one; by smiling upon him;—in Scriptural language, by "lifting up the light of the countenance" upon one. See Notes on Psalm iv. 6. Aversion, hatred, displeasure, are shown by turning away the countenance. God seemed to the psalmist thus to show marks of displeasure towards him, and he earnestly asks *how long* this was to continue.

2. *How long.* This refers to the third aspect of the case, or the third phase of the trouble, *i.e.*, that he was perplexed and embarrassed, having a deep and heavy sorrow in his heart, and he asks how long *this* was to continue. ¶ *Shall I take counsel in my soul.* This refers to the methods which he endeavoured to devise to escape from trouble. He was perplexed, persecuted, and apparently forsaken; and being thus apparently forsaken, he was constrained to attempt to devise some plan for his own deliverance, without interposition or help from on high. He was under a necessity of relying on himself; and he asks *how long* this was to continue, or when he might hope that God would interpose to aid him by *his* counsels, and thus to deliver him. ¶ Having *sorrow in my heart daily.* Every day; constantly. That is, there was no intermission to his troubles. The sorrow in his heart seems to have been not merely that which was caused by troubles from without, but also that which sprang from the painful necessity of attempting to form plans for his own relief,—plans which seemed to be in vain. ¶ *How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?* This is the fourth form or phase of his trouble, and he asks how long *this* was to continue. This clause suggests perhaps the exact form of the trial. It was that which arose from the designs of an enemy who persecuted and oppressed the psalmist, and who had done it so effectually that he seemed to have triumphed over him, or to have him completely in his power. All the other forms of the trial—the fact that he seemed to be forgotten; that God had apparently averted his face; that he was left to form plans of deliverance which seemed to be vain, were connected with the fact here adverted to, that an *enemy* had persecuted him, and had been suffered to gain a triumph over him. Who this enemy was we do not know.

3 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep [h] the *sleep of* death;

[h] Jer. li. 39.

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

5 But I have trusted in thy

3. *Consider* and *hear me.* Literally, "Look, hear me." God had seemed to avert his face as if he would not even look upon him (ver. 1); and the psalmist now prays that he *would* look upon him—that he would regard his wants—that he would attend to his cry. So we pray to one who turns away from us as if he were not disposed to hear, and as if he cared nothing about us. ¶ *Lighten mine eyes.* The allusion here is, probably, to his exhaustion, arising from trouble and despair, as if he were about to die. The sight grows dim as death approaches; and he seemed to feel that death was near. He says that unless God should interpose, the darkness would deepen, and he must die. The prayer, therefore, that God would "enlighten his eyes," was a prayer that he would interpose and save him from that death which he felt was rapidly approaching. ¶ *Lest I sleep the* sleep of *death.* Literally, "Lest I sleep the death;" that is, *in* death, or, as in the common version, the sleep of death. The idea is, that death, whose approach was indicated by the dimness of vision, was fast stealing over him as a sleep, and that unless his clearness of vision were restored, it would soon end in the total darkness—the deep and profound sleep—of death. Death is often compared to sleep. See Notes on 1 Cor. xi. 30; John xi. 11, 13; 1 Thess. iv. 14; Daniel xii. 2. The resemblance between the two is so obvious as to have been remarked in all ages, and the comparison is found in the writings of all nations. It is only, however, in connexion with Christianity that the idea has been fully carried out by the doctrine of the resurrection; for as we lie down at night with the hope of awaking to the pursuits and enjoyments of a new day, so the Christian lies down in death with the hope of awaking in the morning of the resurrection to the pursuits and enjoyments of a new and eternal day. Everywhere else death is to the mind a long and unbroken sleep. Comp. Jer. li. 39, 57.

4. *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him.* I have overpowered him; I have conquered him. That is, to triumph over him as having obtained a complete victory. ¶ *And those that trouble me.* Heb., *My adversaries.* The reference here is the same as in the former member of the verse. It is to the enemies that seemed almost to have triumphed over him already, and under whose power he was ready to sink. ¶ *Rejoice.* Exult; triumph. ¶ *When I am moved.* Moved from my steadfastness or firmness; when I am overcome. Hitherto he had been able to hold out against them; now he began to despair, and to fear that they would accomplish their object by overcoming and subduing him. His ground of apprehension and of appeal was, that by his being vanquished the cause in which he was engaged would suffer, and that the enemies of religion would triumph.

5. *But I have trusted in thy mercy.* In thy favour; thy friendship; thy promises. His original confidence had been in God only, and not in himself. That confidence he still maintained; and now, as the result of that, he begins to exult in the confidence that he would be safe. The idea is, "I have trusted in the mercy of God; I still trust, and I will trust for ever." ¶ *My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.* The word *salvation* here does not refer to salvation in the future world, but to deliverance from his present troubles, or to God's interposition in putting him into a condition

mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

of safety. The idea is, that he had entire confidence that God *would* interpose, and that there would yet be cause to rejoice in that salvation as actually accomplished. He now calls on his heart to rejoice in the assurance that it would be his. So with us. There will not only be rejoicing in salvation when actually accomplished, but there may, and should be, in the firm conviction that it will be ours.

6. *I will sing unto the* LORD, *because he hath dealt bountifully with me.* The word which is here rendered *dealt bountifully*—גָּמַל, *gamal*—means properly to *deal* with any one; to *treat* any one well or ill; and then, to requite, or recompense. When used absolutely, as it is here, it is commonly employed in a good sense, meaning to deal favourably, or kindly, towards any one; to treat any one with favour. It means here that God had shown him kindness or favour, and had thus laid the foundation for gratitude and praise. The psalm closes, therefore, with expressions of joy, thankfulness, triumph. Though it begins with depression and sadness, it ends with joy. This is often observable in the Psalms. In the commencement it often occurs that the mind is overwhelmed with sorrow, and there is earnest pleading with God. Light, under the influence of prayer, breaks in gradually upon the soul. The clouds disperse; the darkness disappears. New views of the goodness and mercy of God are imparted; an assurance of his favour is brought to the soul; confidence in his mercy springs up in the heart; and the psalm that began with sorrowful complaining ends with the language of praise and of joy. So, too, it is in our own experience. Afflicted, depressed, and sad, we go to God. Everything seems dark. We have no peace—no clear and cheerful views—no joy. As we wait upon God, new views of his character, his mercy, his love, break upon the mind. The clouds open. Light beams upon us. Our souls take hold of the promises of God, and we, who went to his throne sad and desponding, rise from our devotions filled with praise and joy, submissive to the trials which made us so sad, and rejoicing in the belief that all things will work together for our good.

PSALM XIV.

This purports to be one of David's psalms, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription. Yet we are entirely ignorant of the time and the circumstances of its composition. There is nothing in the psalm that throws any light on this point, and conjecture would be vain. It would seem to have been composed under the influence of an affecting conviction of the depth and extent of human depravity, and in view of prevalent impiety and neglect of God; but such a state of things was not confined to any one period of the life of David, as it is not to any one country or period of the world. Unhappily there has been no country and no age in which, in view of existing facts, such a psalm as this might not have been composed; or in which the entire proof on which the psalmist relies to support his melancholy conclusions, might not have been found.

The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. A statement of prevalent depravity, particularly in denying the existence of God, or in expressing the wish that there were no God, ver. 1.

II. The evidence of this, vers. 2-4. This is found in two things:—(*a*) first, in the representation that the Lord looked down from heaven for the very purpose of ascertaining whether there were any that "understood and sought after God," and that the result of this investigation was that *all* had gone aside, and had become defiled with sin, vers. 2, 3. (*b*) The second proof is a prevailing disposition on the part of the wicked to judge severely of the conduct of God's people; to magnify their errors and

PSALM XIV.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; *there is* none that doeth good.

faults; to make use of their imperfections to sustain themselves in their own course of life—represented by their "eating up the sins of God's people as they eat bread," ver. 4. There was an utter want of kindness and charity in regard to the imperfections of others; and a desire to find the people of God so offending that they could, by *their* imperfections and faults, sustain and vindicate their own conduct in neglecting religion. The idea is that, in their apprehension, the religion of such persons was not desirable,—that the God whom they professed to serve could *not* be God.

III. Yet, the psalmist says, they were not wholly calm and satisfied with the conclusion which they were endeavouring to reach, that there was no God. Notwithstanding their expressed wish or desire (ver. 1), that there was, or that there might be no God, their minds were not at ease in that conclusion or desire.

They were, says the psalmist, "in great fear," for there *was* evidence which they could not deny or resist that God was "in the generation of the righteous," or that there was a God such as the righteous served, ver. 5. This evidence was found in the manifestation of his favour towards them; in his interposition in their behalf, in the proof which could not be resisted or denied that he was their friend. These facts produced "fear" or apprehension in the minds of the wicked, notwithstanding all their efforts to be calm.

IV. The psalmist says that their course was designed to bring shame upon the counsel or purposes of the "poor" (that is, the people of God, who were mainly among the poor, or the humble and oppressed classes of the community)—because *they* regarded God as their refuge, ver. 6. As God was their *only* refuge, as they had no human hope or reliance, as *all* their hope would fail if their hope in God failed, so the attempt to show that there was no God was adapted and designed to overwhelm them with shame and confusion—still more to aggravate their sufferings by taking away their only hope, and leaving them to despair. Their religion was their only consolation, and the purpose of those who wished that there were no God was to take even this last comfort away.

V. The psalm closes, in view of these thoughts, with an earnest prayer that God would interpose to deliver his poor and oppressed people, and with the statement that *when* this should occur, his people would rejoice, ver. 7. Instead of their low and oppressed condition—a condition wherein their enemies triumphed over them, and endeavoured still further to aggravate their sorrows by taking away even their faith in God—they would rejoice in him, and in the full proof of his existence and of his favour towards them.

The psalm, therefore, is designed to describe a condition of things in which wickedness abounds, and when it takes this form—an attempt to show that there is no God; that is, when there is a prevalence of *atheism*, and when the design of this is to aggravate the sufferings and the trials of the professed friends of God by unsettling their faith in the Divine existence.

The title is the same as in Ps. xi. and xii. Comp. Notes on the title to Ps. iv.

1. *The fool.* The word *fool* is often used in the Scriptures to denote a wicked man—as sin is the essence of folly. Comp. Job ii. 10; Ps. lxxiv. 18; Gen. xxxiv. 7; Deut. xxii. 21. The Hebrew word is rendered *vile person* in Isaiah xxxii. 5, 6. Elsewhere it is rendered *fool, foolish,* and *foolish man.* It is designed to convey the idea that wickedness or impiety is essential folly, or to use a term in describing the wicked which will, perhaps, more than any other, make the mind averse to the sin—for there is many a man who would see more in the word *fool* to be hated than in the word *wicked;* who would rather be called a *sinner* than a *fool.* ¶ *Hath said.* That is, has *thought,* for the reference is to what is passing in his mind. ¶ *In his heart.* See Notes on Ps. x. 11. He may not have said this to others; he may not have taken the position openly before

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

the world that there is no God, but such a thought has passed through his mind, and he has cherished it; and such a thought, either as a matter of belief or of desire, is at the foundation of his conduct. He *acts* as if such were his belief or his wish. ¶ There is *no God.* The words "there is" are not in the original. The literal rendering would be either "no God," "nothing of God," or "God is not." The idea is that, in his apprehension, there is no such thing as God, or no such being as God. The more correct idea in the passage is, that this was the *belief* of him who is here called a "fool;" and it is doubtful whether the language would convey the idea of *desire*—or of a *wish* that this might be so; but still there can be no doubt that such *is* the wish or desire of the wicked, and that they listen eagerly to any suggestions or arguments which, in their apprehension, would go to demonstrate that there is no such being as God. The *exact* state of mind, however, indicated by the *language* here, undoubtedly is that such was the opinion or the belief of him who is here called a fool. If this is the true interpretation, then the passage would prove that there have been men who were atheists. The passage would prove, also, in its connexion, that such a belief was closely linked, either as a cause or a consequent, with a corrupt life; for this statement immediately follows in regard to the character of those who are represented as saying that there is no God. As a matter of fact, the belief that there is no God is commonly founded on the desire to lead a wicked life; or, the opinion that there is no God is embraced by those who in fact lead such a life, with a desire to sustain themselves in their depravity, and to avoid the fear of future retribution. A man who wishes to lead an upright life, *desires* to find evidence that there is a God, and to such a man nothing would be more dark and distressing than anything which would compel him to doubt the fact of God's existence. It is only a wicked man who finds pleasure in an argument to prove that there is no God, and the wish that there were no God springs up only in a bad heart. ¶ *They are corrupt.* That is, they have done corruptly; or, their conduct is corrupt. ¶ *They have done abominable works.* They have done that which is to be abominated or abhorred; that which is to be detested, and which is fitted to fill the mind with horror. ¶ There is *none that doeth good.* Depravity is universal. All have fallen into sin; all fail to do good. None are found who are disposed to worship their Maker, and to keep his laws. This was originally spoken, undoubtedly, with reference to the age in which the psalmist lived; but it is applied by the apostle Paul, Rom. iii. 10 (see Notes on that passage), as an argument for the universal depravity of mankind.

2. *The* LORD *looked down from heaven.* The original word here—שָׁקַף, *shakaph*—conveys the idea of *bending forward*, and hence of an intense and anxious looking, as we bend forward when we wish to examine anything with attention, or when we look out for one who is expected to come. The idea is that God looked intently, or so as to secure a close examination, upon the children of men, for the express purpose of ascertaining whether there were any that were good. He looked at all men; he examined all their pretensions to goodness, and he saw none who could be regarded as exempt from the charge of depravity. Nothing could more clearly prove the doctrine of universal depravity than to say that an Omniscient God made *an express examination* on this very point, that he looked over all the world, and that in the multitudes which passed under the notice of his eye not *one* could be

3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become [1] filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

[1] *stinking.*

found who could be pronounced righteous. If God could not find such an one, assuredly man cannot. ¶ *Upon the children of men.* Upon mankind; upon the human race. They are called "children," or *sons* (Hebrew), because they are all the descendants of the man that God created—of Adam. Indeed the original word here is *Adam*—אָדָם. And it may be questionable whether, since this became in fact a proper name, designating the first man, it would not have been proper to retain the idea in the translation—"the sons of Adam;" that is, all his descendants. The phrase occurs frequently to denote the human race, Deut. xxxii. 8; Ps. xi. 4; xxi. 10; xxxi. 19; xxxvi. 7; lvii. 4; *et sæpe.* ¶ *To see if there were any that did understand.* If there were one acting wisely—to wit, in seeking God. "Acting wisely" here stands in contrast with the folly referred to in the first verse. Religion is always represented in the Scriptures as true wisdom. ¶ And *seek God.* The knowledge of him; his favour and friendship. Wisdom is shown by a *desire* to become acquainted with the being and perfections of God, as well as in the actual possession of that knowledge; and in no way can the true character of man be better determined than by the actual interest which is felt in becoming acquainted with the character of him who made and who governs the universe. It is one of the clearest proofs of human depravity that there *is* no prevailing desire among men thus to ascertain the character of God.

3. *They are all gone aside.* This verse states the result of the Divine investigation referred to in the previous verse. The result, as seen by God himself, was, that *all* were seen to have gone aside, and to have become filthy. The word rendered "gone aside" means properly to go off, to turn aside or away, to depart; as, for example, to turn out of the right way or path, Ex. xxxii. 8. Then it means to turn away from God; to fall away from his worship; to apostatize, 1 Sam. xii. 20; 2 Kings xviii. 6; 2 Chron. xxv. 27. This is the idea here—that they had all apostatized from the living God. The word "all" in the circumstances makes the statement as universal as it can be made; and no term could be used more clearly affirming the doctrine of universal depravity. ¶ *They are* all *together become filthy.* The word "*all*" here is supplied by the translators. It was not necessary, however, to introduce it in order that the idea of universal depravity might be expressed, for that is implied in the word rendered *together*, יַחְדָּו, *yahhdâv.* That word properly conveys the idea that the same character or conduct pervaded all, or that the same thing might be expressed of all those referred to. They were *united* in this thing—that they had become defiled or filthy. The word is used with reference to *persons*, as meaning that they are all *in one place*, Gen. xiii. 6; xxii. 6; or to *events*, as meaning that they occurred *at one time*, Ps. iv. 8. They were all as one. Comp. 1 Chron. x. 6. The idea is that, in respect to the statement made, they were alike. What would describe one would describe all. The word rendered "become filthy" is, in the margin, rendered *stinking.* In Arabic the word means to become *sharp*, or *sour* as milk; and hence the idea of becoming corrupt in a moral sense. Gesenius, *Lex.* The word is found only here, and in the parallel Ps. liii. 3, and in Job xv. 16, in each of which places it is rendered *filthy.* It relates here to character, and means that their character was morally corrupt or de-

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

filed. The term is often used in that sense now. ¶ There is *none that doeth good, no, not one.* Nothing could more clearly express the idea of universal depravity than this expression. It is not merely that no one could be found who did good, but the expression is repeated to give emphasis to the statement. This entire passage is quoted in Rom. iii. 10—12, in proof of the doctrine of universal depravity. See Notes on that passage.

4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Literally, "Do they not know, all the workers of iniquity, eating my people, they eat bread; Jehovah they call not." The several statements in this verse in confirmation of the fact of their depravity are —(*a*) that they have no knowledge of God; (*b*) that they find pleasure in the errors and imperfections of the people of God—sustaining themselves in their own wickedness by the fact that the professed friends of God are inconsistent in their lives; and (*c*) that they do not call on the name of the Lord, or that they offer no worship to him. The whole verse might have been, and should have been put in the form of a question. The first statement implied in the question is, that they have *no knowledge.* This can be regarded as a proof of guilt only (1) as they have opportunities of obtaining knowledge; (2) as they neglect to improve those opportunities, and remain in voluntary ignorance; and (3) as they do this from a design to practise wickedness. See this argument stated at length by the apostle Paul in Rom. i. 19—28. Comp. Notes on that passage. *This* proof of human depravity is everywhere manifested still in the world, —in the fact that men have the opportunities of gaining the knowledge of God if they chose to do it; in the fact that they voluntarily neglect those opportunities; and in the fact that the reason of this is that they love iniquity. ¶ *Who eat up my people* as *they eat bread.* They sustain themselves in their own course of life by the imperfections of the people of God. That is, they make use of their inconsistencies to confirm themselves in the belief that there is no God. They argue that a religion which produces no better fruits than what is seen in the lives of its professed friends can be of no value, or cannot be genuine; that if a professed belief in God produces no happier results than are found in their lives, it could be of no advantage to worship God; that they are themselves as good as those are who profess to be religious, and that, therefore, there can be no evidence from the lives of the professed friends of God that religion is either true or of any value. No inconsiderable part of the evidence in favour of religion, it is intended, shall be derived from the lives of its friends; and when that evidence is not furnished, of course no small part of the proof of its reality and value is lost. Hence so much importance is attached everywhere in the Bible to the necessity of a consistent life on the part of the professed friends of religion. Comp. Isa. xliii. 10. The words "my people" here are properly to be regarded as the words of the psalmist, identifying himself with the people of God, and speaking of them thus as *his own people.* Thus one speaks of his own family or his own friends. Comp. Ruth i. 16. Or this may be spoken by David, considered as the head or ruler of the nation, and he may thus speak of the people of God as his people. The connexion does not allow of the construction which would refer the words to God. ¶ *And call not upon the* LORD. They do not worship Jehovah. They give this evidence of wickedness that they do not pray; that they do not invoke

5 [1] There were they in great fear: [i] for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

[1] *they feared a fear.*

6 Ye have shamed the counsel

[i] Psa. liii. 5.

the blessing of their Maker; that they do not publicly acknowledge him as God. It is remarkable that this is placed as the last or the crowning thing in the evidence of their depravity; and if rightly considered, it is so. To one who should look at things as they are; to one who sees all the claims and obligations which rest upon mankind; to one who appreciates his own guilt, his dependance, and his exposure to death and woe; to one who understands aright why man was made,—there can be no more striking proof of human depravity than in the fact that a man in no way acknowledges his Maker,—that he renders him no homage,—that he never supplicates his favour,—never deprecates his wrath,—that, amidst the trials, the temptations, the perils of life, he endeavours to make his way through the world *as if there were no God.* The highest crime that Gabriel could commit would be to renounce all allegiance to his Maker, and henceforward to live *as if* there were no God. All other iniquities that he might commit would spring out of *that,* and would be secondary to *that.* The great sin of man consists in renouncing God, and attempting to live as if there were no Supreme Being to whom he owes allegiance. All other sins spring out of that, and are subordinate to it.

5. *There were they in great fear.* Marg., as in Heb., *they feared a fear.* The idea is, that they were in great terror or consternation. They were not *calm* in their belief that there was no God. They endeavoured to be. They wished to satisfy themselves that there was no God, and that they had nothing to dread. But they could not do this. In spite of all their efforts, there was such proof of his existence, and of his being the friend of the righteous, and consequently the enemy of such as they themselves were, as to fill their minds with alarm. Men cannot, by an effort of will, get rid of the evidence that there is a God. In the face of all their attempts to convince themselves of this, the demonstration of his existence will press upon them, and will often fill their minds with terror. ¶ *For God* is *in the generation of the righteous.* The word *generation* here, as applied to the righteous, seems to refer to them as a *race,* or as a *class* of men. Comp. Ps. xxiv. 6; lxxiii. 15; cxii. 2. It commonly in the Scriptures refers to a certain age or duration, as it is used by us, reckoning an age or generation as about thirty or forty years (comp. Job xlii. 16); but in the use of the term before us the idea of an *age* is dropped, and the righteous are spoken of merely as a *class* or *race* of persons. The idea here is, that there were such manifest proofs that God was among the righteous, and that he was their friend, that the wicked could not resist the force of that evidence, however much they might desire it, and however much they might wish to arrive at the conclusion that there was no God. The evidence that he *was* among the righteous would, of course, alarm them, because the very fact that he was the friend of the righteous demonstrated that he must be the enemy of the wicked, and, of course, that they were exposed to his wrath.

6. *Ye have shamed.* The address here is made directly to the wicked themselves, to show them the baseness of their own conduct, and, perhaps, in connexion with the previous verse, to show them what occasion they had for fear. The idea in the verse seems to be, that as God was the protector of the "poor" who had come to him for "refuge," and as they had "shamed the counsel of the poor" who had done this, they had real occasion for alarm. The phrase

of the poor; because the LORD *is* his refuge.

7 [1] Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* [k] out of Zion! When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob

[1] *who will give.*

[k] Rom. xi. 26.

"ye have shamed" seems to mean that they had *despised* it, or had treated it with derision, that is, they had laughed at, or had mocked the purpose of the poor in putting their trust in Jehovah. ¶ *The counsel.* The purpose, the plan, the act—of the poor; that is, in putting their trust in the Lord. They had derided this as vain and foolish, since they maintained that there was no God (ver. 1). They therefore regarded such an act as mere illusion. ¶ *The poor.* The righteous, considered *as* poor, or as afflicted. The word here rendered *poor*—עָנִי, *ani* — means more properly, afflicted, distressed, needy. It is often rendered *afflicted,* Job xxxiv. 28; Ps. xviii. 27; xxii. 24; xxv. 16; lxxxii. 3; *et al.* In Ps. ix. 12 and x. 12 it is rendered *humble.* The common rendering, however, is "poor," but it refers properly to the righteous, with the idea that they are afflicted, needy, and in humble circumstances. This is the idea here. The wicked had derided those who, in circumstances of poverty, depression, want, trial, had no other resource, and who had sought their comfort in God. These reproaches tended to take away their last consolation, and to cover them with confusion; it was proper, therefore, that they who had done this should be overwhelmed with fear. If there is anything which deserves punishment it is the act which would take away from the world the last hope of the wretched—*that there is a God.* ¶ *Because the* LORD is *his refuge.* He has made the Lord his refuge. In his poverty, affliction, and trouble, he has come to God, and put his trust in him. *This* source of comfort, the doctrine of the wicked—that there "was no God"—tended to destroy. Atheism cuts off every hope of man, and leaves the wretched to despair. It would put out the last light that gleams on the earth, and cover the world with total and eternal night.

7. *Oh that the salvation of Israel.* Marg., *Who will give,* etc. The Hebrew literally is, "Who will give out of Zion salvation to Israel?" The word *Israel* refers primarily to the Hebrew people, and then it is used generally to denote the people of God. The wish here expressed is in view of the facts referred to in the previous verses —the general prevalence of iniquity and of practical atheism, and the sufferings of the people of God on that account. This state of things suggests the earnest desire that from all such evils the people of God might be delivered. The expression in the original, as in the margin, "*Who will give,*" is a common expression in Hebrew, and means the same as in our translation, "*Oh that.*" It is expressive of an earnest desire, as if the thing were in the hand of another, that he would impart that blessing or favour. ¶ *Out of Zion.* On the word *Zion,* see Notes on Isa. i. 8. It is referred to here, as it is often, as the seat or dwelling-place of God; the place from whence he issued his commands, and from whence he put forth his power. Thus in Ps. iii. 4, "He heard me out of his holy hill." Ps. xx. 2, "The Lord .... strengthen thee out of Zion." Ps. cxxviii. 5, "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion." Here the phrase expresses a wish that God, who had his dwelling in Zion, would put forth his power in granting complete deliverance to his people. ¶ *When the* LORD *bringeth back.* Literally "In Jehovah's bringing back the captivity of his people." That is, the particular salvation which the psalmist prayed for was that Jehovah would return the captivity of his people, or restore them from captivity. ¶ *The captivity of*

shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

his people. This is *language* taken from a captivity in a foreign land. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that any such literal captivity is here referred to, nor would it be necessary to infer from this that the psalm was written in the Babylonian captivity, or in any other particular exile of the Hebrew people. The truth was, that the Hebrews were often in this state (see the Book of Judges, *passim*), and this language came to be the common method of expressing any condition of oppression and trouble, or of a low state of religion in the land. Comp. Job xlii. 10. ¶ *Jacob shall rejoice.* Another name for the Hebrew people, as descended from Jacob, Isa. ii. 3; xli. 21; x. 21; xiv. 1; Amos vii. 2; *et sæpe.* Professor Alexander renders this, "Let Jacob exult; let Israel joy." The idea seems to be, that such a restoration would give great joy to the people of God, and the language expresses a desire that this might soon occur—perhaps expressing the idea also that in the certainty of such an ultimate restoration, such a complete salvation, the people of God might *now* rejoice. Thus, too, it will not only be true that the redeemed will be happy in heaven, but they may exult even now in the prospect, the certainty, that they *will* obtain complete salvation.

PSALM XV.

This psalm refers to a single subject, but that the most important which can come before the human mind. It is the question, Who is truly religious? who will enter heaven? who will be saved? The psalm contains a statement of what real religion is; one of the most explicit and formal of the statements which we have in the Old Testament on that subject. The form in which the matter is presented is that of a *question* in the first verse, and of the *answer* to that question in the other verses of the psalm.

I. The question, ver. 1. The question is, Who shall be permitted to reside with God in his tabernacle? who shall be entitled to the privilege of dwelling on his holy hill (that is, Zion, regarded as the dwelling-place of God, and the emblem of heaven)? In other words, Who has such a character as to be entitled to hope for the favour and friendship of God?

II. The answer, vers. 2-5. The answer embraces the following particulars:—

(1) The man who is upright, just, honest, truthful, ver. 2.

(2) The man who treats his neighbour properly; who does not slander or reproach him; who does not readily listen to calumnious reports in regard to him, ver. 3.

(3) The man who regards the righteous and the wicked as they should be regarded; who looks with proper disapprobation on all who are "vile" in their character, and with true respect on all who fear the Lord, ver. 4.

(4) The man who is faithful to an engagement, though it proves to be against his own interest, ver. 4.

(5) The man who does not take advantage of the necessities of others, who does not put out his money "to usury," and who, if a magistrate, does not take a bribe to induce him to condemn the innocent, ver. 5.

These are characteristics of true religion everywhere, and it is as true now as it was when this psalm was composed that it is only those who possess this character who have a right to regard themselves as the friends of God, or who have a well-founded hope of dwelling with him in heaven.

The psalm purports, in the title, to be "A Psalm of David." It is not known on what occasion it was written, nor is it material to know this in order to understand the psalm. It has been supposed by some that it was composed on the occasion when the ark was carried up from the house of Obed-edom (2 Sam. vi. 12, seq.), but there is nothing in the psalm itself which should lead us to refer it to that occasion, or to any other special occasion. It seems rather—like Ps. i.—to be adapted to all times and all places. It contains a general illustration of the nature of true religion, and there has been no state of things in the world in which such a psalm might not be appropriately composed; there is none in which it may not be appropriately read and pondered.

PSALM XV.

A Psalm of David.

LORD, who shall [1] abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 *He that* backbiteth not with

[1] *sojourn.*

1. LORD, *who shall abide in thy tabernacle?* Marg., *sojourn.* The Hebrew word means properly to *sojourn;* that is, to abide in a place *as* a sojourner or stranger; not permanently, but only for a while. The idea in this place is taken from the word *tabernacle* or *tent,* with which one naturally associates the thought of sojourning, rather than that of a permanent abode. Comp. Heb. xi. 9. It should not be inferred, however, that it is meant here that the residence with God would be *temporary.* The idea of permanency is fully expressed in the other member of the sentence, and the language here is only such as was customary in speaking of the righteous—language derived from the fact that in early times men dwelt in tents rather than in permanent habitations. ¶ *Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* Zion, regarded as the dwelling-place of God, and the type of heaven—the eternal abode of the Most High. See Notes on Ps. ii. 6. The question is equivalent to asking, Who is qualified to dwell with God? who may properly be regarded as his friend? who has a title to his favour? who is truly pious? By us the same question would be put in another form, though implying the same thing: Who is qualified to become a member of the church; who has evidence of true conversion and real piety? who is he who is prepared for heaven?

2. *He that walketh uprightly.* Heb., "walking perfectly;" that is, one who walks or lives *perfectly.* The word "*walk*" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the manner of life;—life being represented as a journey. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. The word here rendered "uprightly," or, in the Hebrew, *perfectly,* means that which is complete in all its parts; where no part is wanting or is defective. See the word explained in the Notes on Job i. 1. The word is not used in the sense in which it is often employed now, as denoting absolute freedom from sin, but as meaning that the character was *complete* in all its parts; or that the person referred to was upright alike in regard to God and to man. See the sentiment here expressed explained in the Notes on Isa. xxxiii. 15. ¶ *And worketh righteousness.* Does right. That is, he does what is proper to be done in relation to God and to man. Compare Micah vi. 8. The doctrine is everywhere laid down in the Scriptures that no man can be a friend of God who does not do habitually what is *right.* See 1 John iii. 6—10. ¶ *And speaketh the truth in his heart.* He uses language that is sincere, and that is in accordance with his real belief. This is opposed to all mere outward professions, and all hypocritical pretences. His religion has its seat in the heart, and is not the religion of forms; his acts are the expressions of upright intentions and purposes, and are not performed for selfish and hypocritical ends. This is everywhere the nature of true religion.

3. He that *backbiteth not with his tongue.* The word *backbite* means to censure; slander; reproach; speak evil of. The Hebrew word—רָגַל, *ragal*—a verb formed from the word *foot,* means properly *to foot it,* and then *to go about.* Then it means to go about as a tale-bearer or slanderer; to circulate reports unfavourable to others. It is not improperly rendered here *backbite;* and the idea is, that it is essential to true piety that one should *not* be a slanderer, or should *not* circulate evil reports in regard to others. On the use of the *tongue,* see Notes on James iii. 2—11.

his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor [1] taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

[1] Or, *receiveth*, or, *endureth*.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

¶ *Nor doeth evil to his neighbour.* That does his neighbour no harm. This refers to injury in any way, whether by word or deed. The idea is, that the man who will be admitted to dwell on the holy hill of Zion, the man who is truly religious, is one who does no injury to any one; who always does that which is right to others. The word *neighbour* usually refers to one who resides near us; and then it denotes all persons who are near to us in the sense that we have business relations with them;—all persons with whom we have anything to do. It is used in this sense here as referring to our dealings with other persons. ¶ *Nor taketh up a reproach.* Marg., or *receiveth*, or, *endureth*. The idea is that of *taking up*, or receiving as true, or readily giving credit to it. He is slow to believe evil of another. He does not grasp at it greedily as if he had pleasure in it. He does not himself originate such a reproach, nor does he readily and cheerfully credit it when it is stated by others. If he is constrained to believe it, it is only because the evidence becomes so strong that he cannot resist it, and his believing it is contrary to all the desires of his heart. This is true religion everywhere; but this is contrary to the conduct of no small part of the world. There are large classes of persons to whom nothing is more acceptable than reproachful accusations of others, and who embrace no reports more readily than they do those which impute bad conduct or bad motives to them. Often there is nothing more marked in true conversion than the change which is produced in this respect. He who delighted in gossip and in slanderous reports of others; who found pleasure in the alleged failings and errors of his neighbours; who gladly lent a listening ear to the first intimations of this kind, and who cheerfully contributed his influence in giving circulation to such things, augmenting such reports as they passed through his hands,—now sincerely rejoices on hearing everybody well spoken of, and does all that can be done consistently with truth to check such reports, and to secure to every man a good name.

4. *In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.* That is, who does not show respect to a man of base or bad character on account of his wealth, his position, or his rank in life. He estimates character as it is in itself, and not as derived from rank, relationship, or station. While, as stated in the previous verse, he is not disposed to take up a false or evil report against another, he is at the same time disposed to do justice to all, and does not honour those who do not deserve to be honoured, or apologise for base conduct because it is committed by one of exalted station or rank. Loving virtue and piety for their own sake, he hates all that is opposite; and where conduct *deserves* reprobation, no matter where found, he does not hesitate to avow his conviction in regard to it. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Psalm i. 1. See Notes on that verse. ¶ *But he honoureth them that fear the* LORD. No matter in what rank or condition of life they may be found. Where there is true piety he honours it. He is willing to be known as one that honours it, and is willing to bear all the reproach that may be connected with such a deeply cherished respect, and with such an avowal. Comp. Psalm i. 1. ¶ He that *sweareth to* his own *hurt, and changeth not.* Who has made a promise, or entered into a contract,

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, [l] nor taketh reward against the innocent. He

[l] Ezek. xviii. 8, 17; xxii. 12.

that is likely to turn out contrary to his expectations, to his own disadvantage; but who still adheres to his engagement. If the thing itself is wrong; if he has made a promise, or pledged himself to do a wicked thing, he cannot be under obligation to execute it; he should at once abandon it (comp. Notes on Matt. xiv. 9); but he is not at liberty to violate an agreement simply because it will be a loss to him, or because he ascertains that it will not be, as he supposed, to his advantage. The principles here laid down will extend to all contracts or agreements, pecuniary or otherwise, and should be a general principle regulating all our transactions with our fellow-men. The only limitation in the rule is that above stated, when the promise or the contract would involve that which is morally wrong.

5. He that *putteth not out his money to usury.* The word *usury* formerly denoted legal interest, or a premium for the *use* of money. In this sense the word is no longer used in our language, but it always now denotes *unlawful* interest; "a premium or compensation paid, or stipulated to be paid, for the use of money borrowed or retained, beyond the rate of interest established by law." *Webster.*—The Hebrew word used here—נֶשֶׁךְ, *neshech*—means *interest*, that is, a premium or compensation for the use of money in any manner, or to any extent. The reference is to the law of the Hebrews, which forbade such a loaning of money to the poor, and especially to poor Israelites, Ex. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 35, 36, 37. Although this was forbidden in respect to the Israelites, yet the lending of money on interest, or "usury" in a lawful sense, was allowed towards "strangers," or towards the people of other nations. See Deut. xxiii. 19, 20. The ground of the distinction was, that the Hebrews were regarded as a nation of brethren; that, as such, they should be willing to accommodate and aid each other; that they should not do anything that could be regarded as unbrotherly. In respect to other people it was allowed, not because it was proper to take advantage of their wants, and to oppress them, but because this peculiar reason did not exist in regard to them. That might be improper *in a family*, among brothers and sisters, which would be entirely proper towards those who did not sustain this peculiar relation; and we may conceive of cases—such cases in fact often occur—when it would be unkind in the highest degree to exact interest of a brother, or an intimate friend, while it is perfectly proper to receive the ordinary allowance for the use of money in our business transactions (that is, the ordinary rate of interest) of those who do not sustain to us this peculiar relation. The fact that it was allowed to the Hebrews to take interest of the people of other nations, shows that there was nothing morally wrong in the thing itself; and, in fact, there can be no reason why a man, to whom it is an accommodation, should not *pay* for the use of money as well as for the use of any other property. The thing forbidden here, therefore, is not the taking of interest in any case, but the taking of interest in such a way as would be oppressive and hard,—as of a Hebrew demanding it from his poor and needy brother; and, by consequence, it would forbid the exacting of unusual and unlawful rates of interest, or taking advantage of the necessities of others—by evading the provisions of law, and making their circumstances an occasion of extortion. In one word, the thing forbidden is a harsh, grasping, griping disposition; a disposition to take advantage of the embarrassments of others to increase our own gains.

that doeth these *things* shall never [m] be moved.

m 2 Pet. i. 10.

Kindness, and an accommodating spirit in business transactions, are as much demanded now by the principles of religion as they were when this psalm was written, or as they were under the law which forbade the taking of interest from a poor and needy brother. ¶ *Nor taketh reward against the innocent.* Who does not take a bribe; that is, does not accept a pecuniary consideration, or any other consideration, to induce him to decide a cause against justice. He is not, in any way, to allow any such considerations to influence him, or to sway his judgment. The taking of bribes is often expressly forbidden in the Scriptures. See Ex. xxiii. 8; Deut. xvi. 19; xxvii. 25; Prov. xvii. 23. ¶ *He that doeth these* things *shall never be moved.* That is, in answer to the question in ver. 1, he shall be permitted to "abide in the tabernacle" of God, and to "dwell in his holy hill." He shall have a solid foundation of hope; he is a friend of God, and shall enjoy his favour for ever. In other words, these things constitute true religion; and he who has such a character will obtain eternal life. His foundation is sure; he will be safe in all the storms of life, and safe when the cold waves of death beat around him. Comp. Matt. vii. 24, 25.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm expresses a confident expectation of eternal life and happiness, founded on the evidence of true attachment to God. It expresses the deep conviction that one who loves God will not be left in the grave, and will not be suffered to see permanent "corruption," or to perish in the grave, for ever.

The contents of the psalm are the following:—

(1) An earnest prayer of the author for preservation on the ground that he had put his trust in God, ver. 1.

(2) A statement of his attachment to God, vers. 2, 3, founded partly on his consciousness of such attachment (ver. 2), and partly on the fact that he truly loved the friends of God, ver. 3.

(3) A statement of the fact that he had no sympathy with those who rejected the true God; that he did not, and would not, participate in their worship. The Lord was his portion, and his inheritance, vers. 4, 5.

(4) Thankfulness that the lines had fallen unto him in such pleasant places; that he had had his birth and lot where the true God was adored, and not in a land of idolaters, vers. 6, 7.

(5) A confident expectation, on the ground of his attachment to God, that he would be happy for ever; that he would not be left to perish in the grave; that he would obtain eternal life at the right hand of God, vers. 8-11. This expectation implies the following particulars:—

(*a*) That he would never be moved; that is, that he would not be disappointed and cast off, ver. 8.

(*b*) That, though he was to die, his flesh would rest in hope, ver. 9.

(*c*) That he would not be left in the regions of the dead, nor suffered to lie for ever in the grave, ver. 10.

(*d*) That God would show him the path of life, and give him a place at his right hand, ver. 11.

Nothing can be determined with certainty in regard to the *occasion* on which the psalm was composed. It is such a psalm as might be composed at any time in view of solemn reflections on life, death, the grave, and the world beyond; on the question whether the grave is the end of man, or whether there will be a future. It is made up of happy reflections on the lot and the hopes of the pious; expressing the belief that, although they were to die, there was a brighter world beyond—although they were to be laid in the grave, they would not always remain there; that they would be released from the tomb, and be raised up to the right hand of God. It expresses more clearly than can be found almost anywhere else in the Old Testament a belief in the doctrine of the resurrection—an assurance that those who love God, and keep his commandments, will not always remain in the grave.

The psalm is appealed to by Peter (Acts ii. 25-31), and by Paul (Acts

PSALM XVI.

[1] Michtam of David.

PRESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

[1] Or, *A golden* Psalm, Psa. lvi.—lx.

2 *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: [n] my goodness *extendeth* not to thee;

[n] Job xxxv. 7, 8.

xiii. 35–37), as referring to the resurrection of Christ, and is adduced by them in such a manner as to show they regarded it as proving that He would be raised from the dead. It is not necessary to suppose, in order to a correct understanding of the psalm, that it had an *exclusive* reference to the Messiah, but only that it referred to him in the highest sense, or that it had its complete fulfilment in him. Comp. Introduction to Isaiah, § 7, iii. It undoubtedly expressed the feelings of David in reference to himself—his own hopes in view of death;—while it is true that he was directed to use language in describing his own feelings and hopes which could have a *complete* fulfilment only in the Messiah. In a more full and complete sense, it was true that *he* would not be left in the grave, and that *he* would not be allowed "to see corruption." It was actually true in the sense in which David used the term as applicable to himself that he would not be "left" *permanently* and *ultimately* in the grave, under the dominion of corruption; it was *literally* true of the Messiah, as Peter and Paul argued, that he did not "*see* corruption;" that he was raised from the grave without undergoing that change in the tomb through which all others must pass. As David used the language (as applicable to himself), the hope suggested in the psalm will be fulfilled in the future resurrection of the righteous; as the words are to be *literally* understood, they could be fulfilled only in Christ, who rose from the dead *without* seeing corruption. The argument of Peter and Paul is, that this prophetic language was found in the Old Testament, and that it could have a *complete* fulfilment only in the resurrection of Christ. David, though he would rise as he anticipated, did, *in fact*, return to corruption. Of the Messiah it was literally true that his body did *not* undergo any change in the grave. The reference to the Messiah is, that it had its highest and most complete fulfilment in him. Comp. Notes on Acts ii. 25–31.

The *title* of the psalm is, "Michtam of David." The word *Michtam* occurs only in the following places, in all of which it is used as the title of a psalm: Ps. xvi., lvi., lvii,, lviii., lix., lx. Gesenius supposes that it means a *writing*, especially a poem, psalm, or song; and that its sense is the same as the title to the psalm of Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxviii. 9), where the word used is rendered *writing*. According to Gesenius the word here used—מִכְתָּם, *Michtam*—is the same as the word employed in Isaiah—מִכְתָּב, *Michtab*—the last letter ב, *b*, having been gradually changed to ם, *m*. Others, unaptly, Gesenius says, have derived the word from חֶתֶם; *Chethem*, *gold*, meaning a *golden* psalm; that is, precious, or pre-eminent. De Wette renders it, *Schrift*, writing. It is, perhaps, impossible now to determine why some of the psalms of David should have been merely termed *writings*, while others are mentioned under more specific titles.

1. *Preserve me, O God.* Keep me; guard me; save me. This language implies that there was imminent danger of some kind—perhaps, as the subsequent part of the psalm would seem to indicate, danger of death. See vers. 8—10. The idea here is, that God was able to preserve him from the impending danger, and that he might hope he would do it. ¶ *For in thee do I put my trust.* That is, my hope is in thee. He had no other reliance than God; but he *had* confidence in him—he felt assured that there *was* safety there.

2. O my soul, *thou hast said unto the* LORD. The words "O my soul" are not in the original. A literal rendering of the passage would be, "Thou hast said unto the Lord," etc., leaving something to be supplied. De Wette renders it, "To Jehovah I call; thou art my Lord." Luther, "I have said to the Lord." The Latin Vulgate, "Thou, my soul, hast said to

3 *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth, and *to* the excellent, [o] in whom *is* all my delight.

o Mal. iii. 17.

the Lord." The LXX., "I have said unto the Lord." Bishop Horsley, "I have said unto Jehovah." The speaker evidently is the psalmist; he is describing his feelings towards the Lord, and the idea is equivalent to the expression "*I* have said unto the Lord." Some word must necessarily be understood, and our translators have probably expressed the true sense by inserting the words, "O my soul." The state of mind indicated is that in which one is carefully looking at himself, his own perils, his own ground of hope, and when he finds in himself a ground of just confidence that he has put his trust in God, and in God alone. We have such a form of appeal in Ps. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" ¶ *Thou* art *my Lord.* Thou hast a right to rule over me; or, I acknowledge thee as my Lord, my sovereign. The word here is not *Jehovah*, but *Adonai*—a word of more general signification than *Jehovah.* The sense is, I have acknowledged Jehovah to be my Lord and my God. I receive him and rest upon him as such. ¶ *My goodness* extendeth *not to thee.* This passage has been very variously rendered. Professor Alexander translates it, "My good (is) not besides thee (or, beyond thee);" meaning, as he supposes, "My happiness is not beside thee, independent of, or separable from thee." So De Wette, "There is no success (or good fortune) to me out of thee." Others render it, "My goodness is not such as to entitle me to thy regard." And others, "My happiness is not obligatory or incumbent on thee; thou art not bound to provide for it." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "My good is not given unless by thee." Bishop Horsley, "Thou art my good—not besides thee." I think the meaning is, "My good is nowhere except in thee; I have no source of good of any kind—happiness, hope, life, safety, salvation—but in thee. My good is not without thee." This accords with the idea in the other member of the sentence, where he acknowledges Jehovah as his Lord; in other words, he found in Jehovah all that is implied in the idea of an object of worship—all that is properly expressed by the notion of a *God.* He renounced all other gods, and found his happiness—his all—in Jehovah.

3. But *to the saints that* are *in the earth.* This verse also has been very variously rendered. Our translators seem to have understood it, in connexion with the previous verse, as meaning that his "goodness," or piety, was not of so pure and elevated a character that it could in any way extend to God so as to benefit him, but that it *might* be of service to the saints on earth, and that so, by benefiting them, he might show his attachment to God himself. But if the interpretation of the previous verse above proposed be the correct one, then this interpretation cannot be admitted here. This verse is probably to be regarded as a further statement of the evidence of the attachment of the psalmist to God. In the previous verse, according to the interpretation proposed, he states that his happiness—his all—was centered in God. He had no hope of anything except in him; none beyond him; none besides him. In this verse he states, as a further proof of his attachment to him, that he regarded with deep affection the saints of God; that he found his happiness, not in the society of the wicked, but in the friendship of the excellent of the earth. The verse may be thus rendered:—"As to the saints in the earth (or in respect to the saints in the earth), and to the excellent, all my delight is in them." In the former verse he had stated that, as to God, or in respect to God, he had no source of blessing, no hope, no joy, beyond him, or independent of him; in this verse he says that in respect to the saints—the excellent of the earth—

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* [1] hasten *after* another *god:* their drink-offerings of

[1] Or, *give gifts to another.*

all his delight was in them. Thus he was conscious of true attachment to God and to his people. Thus he had what must ever be essentially the evidence of true piety—a feeling that God is all in all, and real love for those who are his; a feeling that there is nothing *beyond* God, or *without* God, that can meet the wants of the soul, and a sincere affection for all who are his friends on earth. De Wette has well expressed the sense of the passage, "The holy, who are in the land, and the noble,—I have all my pleasure in them." ¶ *In the earth.* In the land; or, perhaps, more generally, *on earth.* God was in heaven, and all his hopes *there* were in *him.* In respect to those who dwelt on the earth, his delight was with the saints alone. ¶ *And to the excellent.* The word here used means properly *large, great,* mighty; then it is applied to *nobles, princes, chiefs;* and then to those who excel in moral qualities, in piety, and virtue. This is the idea here, and thus it corresponds with the word *saints* in the former member of the verse. The idea is that he found his pleasure, not in the rich and the great, not in princes and nobles, but in those who were distinguished for virtue and piety. In heaven he had none but God; on earth he found his happiness only in those who were the friends of God. ¶ *In whom* is *all my delight.* I find all my happiness in their society and friendship. The true state of my heart is indicated by my love for them. Everywhere, and at all times, love for those who love God, and a disposition to find our happiness in their friendship, will be a characteristic of true piety.

4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied.* The word here rendered *sorrows*—עַצָּבוֹת, *atztzeboth*—may mean either *idols* or *sorrows.* Comp. Isa. xlviii. 5; Ps. cxxxix. 24; Job ix. 28; Ps. cxlvii. 3. Some propose to render it, "Their idols are multiplied;" that is, many are the gods which others worship, while I worship one God only. So Gesenius understands it. So also the Chaldee Paraphrase renders it. But the common construction is probably the correct one, meaning that sorrow, pain, anguish, must always attend the worship of any other gods than the true God; and that therefore the psalmist would not be found among their number, or be united with them in their devotions. ¶ That *hasten* after *another* god. Prof. Alexander renders this, "Another they have purchased." Bishop Horsley, "Who betroth themselves to another." The LXX., "After these things they are in haste." The Latin Vulgate, "Afterwards they make haste." The Hebrew word—מָהַר, *mahar*—properly means to hasten; to be quick, prompt, apt. It is twice used (Ex. xxii. 16) in the sense of *buying* or *endowing;* that is, procuring a wife by a price paid to her parents; but the common meaning of the word is to hasten, and this is clearly the sense here. The idea is that the persons referred to show a *readiness* or *willingness* to forsake the true God, and to render service to other gods. Their conduct shows that they do not hesitate to do this when it is proposed to them; that they embrace the first opportunity to do it. Men hesitate and delay when it is proposed to them to serve the true God; they readily embrace an opposite course,—following the world and sin. ¶ *Their drink-offerings of blood.* It was usual to pour out a drink-offering of wine or water in the worship of idol gods, and even of the true God. Thus Jacob (Gen. xxxv. 14) is said to have set up a pillar in Padan-aram, and to have "poured a drink-offering thereon." Comp. Ex. xxix. 40, 41; xxx. 9; Lev. xxiii. 13; Numb. xv. 5. The phrase "drink-offerings *of blood*" would seem to imply that the blood of the animals slain

blood will I not offer, nor take up their names [p] into my lips.

5 The LORD *is* the portion [q] of [1] mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

[p] Hos. ii. 17. [q] Lam. iii. 24. [1] *my part.*

in sacrifice was often mingled with the wine or water that was thus poured out in the services of the heathen gods. So Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Michaelis suppose. It would seem, also, that the worshippers themselves *drank* this mingled cup. They did this when they bound themselves by a solemn oath to perform any dangerous service. *De Wette.*—The eating, and consequently the drinking of blood, was solemnly forbidden to the Israelites (comp. Gen. ix. 4; Lev. iii. 17; vii. 26; xvii. 10); and the idea here is, that the psalmist had solemnly resolved that he would not partake of the abominations of the heathen, or be united with them in any way in their worship. ¶ *Nor take up their names into my lips.* As objects of worship. That is, I will not in any way acknowledge them as gods, or render to them the homage which is due to God. The very mention of the name of any other god than the true God was solemnly forbidden by the law of Moses (Ex. xxiii. 13), "And make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of your mouth." So the apostle Paul says (Eph. v. 3), "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be *named* among you, as becometh saints." The idea in these places seems to be, that the mere *mention* of these things would tend to produce dangerous familiarity with them, and by such familiarity take off something of the repugnance and horror with which they should be regarded. They were, in other words, to be utterly avoided; they were never to be thought of or named; they were to be treated as though they were not. No one can safely so familiarize himself with vice as to render it a frequent subject of conversation. Pollution will flow into the heart from words which describe pollution, even when there is no intention that the use of such words should produce contamination. No one can be familiar with stories or songs of a polluted nature, and still retain a heart of purity. "The very passage of a polluted thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it." How much more is the mind polluted when the thought is dwelt upon, and when utterance is given to it in language!

5. *The* LORD is *the portion of mine inheritance.* In contradistinction from idols. The margin here is, *of my part.* The word properly means *lot, portion, part;* and is applicable to the portion of booty or plunder that fell to any one; or to the portion of land that belonged to any one in the division of an estate, 2 Kings ix. 10, 36, 37. The meaning here is, that Jehovah was the being whom the psalmist worshipped as God, and that he sought no possession or comfort which did not proceed from him. ¶ *And my cup.* The allusion here is to what we drink; and hence the term is used in the sense of *lot* or *portion.* See Notes on Isa. li. 17. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 6. The idea here is this:—"The cup that I drink—that cheers, refreshes, and sustains me—is the Lord. I find comfort, refreshment, happiness, in him alone; not in the intoxicating bowl; not in sensual joys; but in God—in his being, perfections, friendship." ¶ *Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou dost defend my portion, or that which is allotted to me. The reference is to what he specifies in the following verse as his inheritance, and he says that that which was so valuable to him was sustained or preserved by God. He was the portion of his soul; he was the source of all his joy; he maintained or preserved all that was dear to his heart.

6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places*; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.

8 [r] I have set the LORD always before me: because *he* [s] *is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

[r] Acts ii. 25, etc.

[s] Psa. lxxiii. 23—26.

6. *The lines.* The word here used refers to the *lines* employed in measuring and dividing land, Amos vii. 17; 2 Sam. viii. 2. Hence the word comes to denote a portion of land that is *measured out* (or that is *surveyed off*) to any one,—his possession or property; and hence the word refers to the condition in life. The meaning here is, that in running out such a survey, *his* inheritance had been fixed in a pleasant and desirable part of the land. ¶ *Are fallen unto me.* Referring to the appropriation of the different parts of the land by lot. The idea is, that the land was surveyed into distinct portions, and then that the part which fell to any one was determined by lot. This was actually the case in distributing the land of Canaan, Numb. xxvi. 55; xxxiii. 54; xxxvi. 2; Josh. xv.—xix. ¶ *In pleasant* places. In a pleasant or desirable part of the land. ¶ *Yea, I have a goodly heritage.* A good, a desirable inheritance. The meaning is, that he regarded it as a desirable heritage that he lived where the true God was known; where he enjoyed his favour and friendship.

7. *I will bless the* LORD, *who hath given me counsel.* Probably the reference here is to the fact that the Lord had counselled him to choose him as his portion, or had inclined him to his service. There is nothing for which a heart rightly affected is more disposed to praise God than for the fact that by his grace it has been inclined to serve him; and the time when the heart was given away to God is recalled ever onwards as the happiest period of life. ¶ *My reins,* etc. See Notes on Ps. vii. 9. The *reins* are here put for the mind, the soul. They were regarded as the seat of the affections, Jer. xi. 20; Job xix. 27. The meaning here is, that in the wakeful hours of night, when meditating on the Divine character and goodness, he found instruction in regard to God. Comp. Ps. xvii. 3. Everything then is favourable for reflection. The natural calmness and composure of the mind; the stillness of night; the starry heavens; the consciousness that we are alone with God, and that no human eye is upon us,—all these things are favourable to profound religious meditation. They who are kept wakeful by night *need* not find this an unprofitable portion of their lives. Some of the most instructive hours of life are those which are spent when the eyes refuse to close themselves in slumber, and when the universal stillness invites to contemplation on Divine things.

8. *I have set the* LORD *always before me.* By night as well as by day; in my private meditations as well as in my public professions. I have regarded myself always as in the presence of God; I have endeavoured always to feel that his eye was upon me. This, too, is one of the certain characteristics of piety, that we always feel that we are in the presence of God, and that we always act as if his eye were upon us. Comp. Notes on Acts ii. 25. ¶ *Because* he is *at my right hand.* The right hand was regarded as the post of honour and dignity, but it is also mentioned as a position of defence or protection. To have one at our right hand is to have one near us who can defend us. Thus, in Ps. cix. 31, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him," etc. So Psalm cx. 5, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." Ps. cxxi. 5, "The Lord is

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall [1] rest in hope.

[1] *dwell confidently.*

thy Keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." The idea is, that as we use the right hand in our own defence, we seem to have an additional and a needed helper when one is at our right hand. The sense here is, that the psalmist felt that God, as his Protector, was always near him; always ready to interpose for his defence. We have a somewhat similar expression when we say of any one that he is "*at hand;*" that is, he is near us. ¶ *I shall not be moved.* I shall be safe; I shall not be disturbed by fear; I shall be protected from my enemies. See Ps. x. 6; xv. 5. Comp. Ps. xlvi. 5. The language here is that of one who has confidence in God in time of great calamities, and who feels that he is safe under the Divine favour and protection.

8. *Therefore my heart is glad.* In view of this fact, that my confidence is in God alone, and my belief that he is my Protector and Friend. See Notes on Acts ii. 26. ¶ *And my glory rejoiceth.* The LXX. translate this, "my tongue," and this translation is followed by Peter in his quotation of the passage in Acts ii. 26. See Notes on that passage. The meaning here is, that whatever there was in him that was honourable, dignified, or glorious,—all the faculties of his soul, as well as his heart,—had occasion to rejoice in God. His whole nature—his undying soul—his exalted powers as he was made by God—all—all, found cause of exultation in the favour and friendship of God. The heart—the understanding—the imagination—the whole immortal soul, found occasion for joy in God. ¶ *My flesh also.* My body. Or, it may mean, his whole person, he himself, though the direct allusion is to the body considered as lying in the grave, ver. 10. The language is such as one would use of *himself* when he reflected on his own death, and it is equivalent to saying, "I myself, when I am dead, shall rest in hope; my soul will not be left to abide in the gloomy place of the dead; nor will my body remain permanently in the grave under the power of corruption. In reference to my soul and my body—my whole nature—I shall descend to the grave in the hope of a future life." ¶ *Shall rest.* Marg., *dwell confidently.* The Hebrew is literally "shall dwell in confidence" or hope. The word here rendered "shall rest" means properly to let oneself down; to lie down, Num. ix. 17; Ex. xxiv. 16; then, to lay oneself down, to lie down, as, for example, a lion lying down, Deut. xxxiii. 20; or a people in tents, Num. xxiv. 2; and hence, to rest, to take rest, Judges v. 17; and then to abide, to dwell. — *Gesenius, Lex.* Perhaps the sense here is that of *lying down,* considered as lying in the grave, and the expression is equivalent to saying, "When I die I shall lie down in the grave in hope or confidence, not in despair. I shall expect to rise and live again." ¶ *In hope.* The word here used means *trust, confidence, security.* It is the opposite of despair. As used here, it would refer to a state of mind in which there was an expectation of living again, as distinguished from that state of mind in which it was felt that the grave was the end of man. What is particularly to be remarked here is, that this trust or confidence extended to the "flesh" as well as to the "soul;" and the language is such as would be naturally used by one who believed in the resurrection of the body. Language of this kind occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament, showing that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was one to which the sacred writers were not strangers, and that although the doctrine was not as explicitly and formally stated in the Old Testament as in the New, yet that it was a doctrine which had been at some time communicated to man. See Notes on Isa. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii. 2. As applicable

10 For thou wilt not leave [t] my soul in hell: neither wilt thou

[t] Acts iii. 15.

to David, the language here used is expressive of his belief that *he* would rise again, or would not perish in the grave when his body died; as applicable to the Messiah, as applied by Peter (Acts ii. 26), it means that when *he* should die it would be with the hope and expectation of being raised again without seeing corruption. The language is such as to be applicable to both cases; and, in regard to the interpretation of the *language*, it makes no difference whether it was supposed that the resurrection would occur before the body should moulder back to dust, or whether it would occur at a much more remote period, and long *after* it had gone to decay. In either case it would be true that it was laid in the grave "*in hope.*"

10. *For thou wilt not leave.* The language here used implies, of course, that what is here called the soul would be *in* the abode to which the name hell is given, but *how long* it would be there is not intimated. The thought simply is, that it would not be *left* there; it would not be suffered to *remain* there. Whether it would be restored to life again in a few days, or after a longer period, is not implied in the term used. It would be fulfilled, though, as in the case of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection should occur in three days; or though, as in the case of David, it would occur only after many ages; or though, as Abraham believed of Isaac if he was offered as a sacrifice (Heb. xi. 19), he should be restored to life at once. In other words, there is no allusion in this language to *time.* It is only to the *fact* that there would be a restoration to life. ¶ *My soul.* De Wette renders this, *my life.* The Hebrew word—נַפְשִׁי, *nephesh*—which occurs very frequently in the Scriptures, means properly *breath;* then, the vital spirit, life; then, the rational soul, the mind; then, an animal, or animated thing—that which *lives;* then, oneself. Which of these senses is the true one here must be determined from the connexion, and the meaning could probably be determined by a man's asking himself what *he* would think of if he used similar language of himself—"I am about to die; my flesh will go down to the grave, and will rest in hope,—the hope of a resurrection; my breath—my soul—will depart, and I shall be dead; but that life, that soul, will not be extinct: it will not be *left* in the grave, the abode of the dead; it will live again, live on for ever." It seems to me, therefore, that the language here would embrace the immortal part—that which is distinct from the body; and that the word here employed may be properly understood of the soul as we understand that word. The psalmist probably understood by it that part of his nature which was *not* mortal or decaying; that which properly constituted his *life.* ¶ *In hell*—לִשְׁאוֹל, *to Sheol.* See Notes on Ps. vi. 5; Isa. v. 14. This word does not necessarily mean *hell* in the sense in which that term is now commonly employed, as denoting the abode of the wicked in the future world, or the place of punishment; but it means the region or abode of the dead, to which the grave was regarded as the door or entrance—the under-world. The idea is, that the soul would not be suffered to remain in that under-world—that dull, gloomy abode (comp. Notes on Job x. 21, 22), but would rise again to light and life. This language, however, gives no sanction to the words used in the creed, "he descended into *hell,*" nor to the opinion that Christ went down personally to "preach to the spirits in prison"—the souls that are lost (comp. Notes on 1 Peter iii. 19); but it is language derived from the prevailing opinion that the soul, through the grave, descended to the

suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

under-world—to the abodes where the dead were supposed still to reside. See Notes on Isa. xiv. 9. As a matter of fact, the soul of the Saviour at his death entered into "paradise." See Notes on Luke xxiii. 43. ¶ *Neither wilt thou suffer.* Literally, "thou wilt not *give;*" that is, he would not give him over to corruption, or would not suffer him to return to corruption. ¶ *Thine Holy One.* See Notes on Acts ii. 27. The reading here in the text is in the plural form, "thy holy *ones;*" the marginal reading in the Hebrew, or the Keri, is in the singular, "thine Holy *One.*" The singular form is followed by the Chaldee Paraphrase, the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Arabic, and in the New Testament, Acts ii. 27. The Masorites have also pointed the text as if it were in the singular. Many manuscripts and earlier editions of the Bible, and all the ancient versions, read it in the same manner. It is probable, therefore, that this is the true reading. The Hebrew word rendered *holy one*—חָסִיד, *hhâsid*—means properly kind, benevolent, liberal, good, merciful, gracious, pious. *Gesenius, Lex.*—It would be applicable to *any* persons who are pious or religious, but it is here restricted to the one whom the psalmist had in his eye—if the psalm referred to himself, then to himself; if to the Messiah, then to him. The term is several times given to the Saviour as being especially adapted to him. See Mark i. 24; Luke iv. 34; Acts iii. 14; comp. Luke i. 35. It is applied to him as being eminently holy, or as being one whom God regarded as peculiarly his own. As the passage here is expressly applied to him in the Acts of the Apostles (ch. ii. 27), there can be no doubt that it was intended by the Spirit of inspiration to designate him in this place, whatever reference it may have had primarily to David himself. ¶ *To see.* That is, to experience; to be acquainted with. The word is used often to denote perceiving, learning, or understanding anything by experience. Thus, "*to see life,*" Eccl. ix. 9; "*to see death,*" Ps. lxxxix. 48; "*to see sleep,*" Eccl. viii. 16; "*to see famine,*" Jer. v. 12; "*to see good,*" Ps. xxxiv. 12; "*to see affliction,*" Lam. iii. 1; "*to see evil,*" Prov. xxvii. 12. Here it means that he would not *experience* corruption; or would not return to corruption. ¶ *Corruption*—שַׁחַת, *shahhath.* This word is frequently used in the Scriptures. It is translated *ditch* in Job ix. 31; Ps. vii. 15; *corruption* (as here), in Job xvii. 14; Ps. xlix. 9; Jonah ii. 6; *pit,* in Job xxxiii. 18, 24, 28, 30; Ps. ix. 15; xxx. 9; xxxv. 7; Prov. xxvi. 27; Isa. xxxviii. 17; li. 14; Ezek. xix. 4; xxviii. 8; *grave,* in Job xxxiii. 22; and *destruction,* in Ps. lv. 23. The common idea, therefore, according to our translators, is the grave, or a pit. The *derivation* seems not to be certain. Gesenius supposes that it is derived from שׁוּחַ, *shuahh—to sink or settle down;* hence, a pit or the grave. Others derive it from שָׁחַת, *shahhath,* not used in Kal, to destroy. The verb is used in various forms frequently; meaning to destroy, to ruin, to lay waste. It is translated here by the Latin Vulgate, *corruptionem;* by the Septuagint, διαφθοράν, corruption; by the Arabic in the same way. The same word which is employed by the LXX. is employed also in quoting the passage in the New Testament, where the argument of Peter (Acts ii. 27), and of Paul (Acts xiii. 35, 36, 37), is founded on the supposition that such is the sense of the word here; that it does not mean merely *the pit,* or *the grave;* that the idea in the psalm is *not* that the person referred to would not go down to the grave, or would not *die,* but that he would not moulder back to dust in the grave, or that the *change* would not occur to him in the grave which does to those who lie long in the tomb. Peter and

Paul both regard this as a distinct prophecy that the Messiah would be raised from the grave *without* returning to corruption, and they argue from the fact that David *did* return to corruption in the grave like other men, that the passage could not have referred mainly to himself, but that it had a proper fulfilment, and its highest fulfilment, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This interpretation the believer in the inspiration of Peter and Paul is bound to defend, and in reference to this it may be remarked, (1) that it cannot be demonstrated that this is *not* the meaning of the word. The word may be as *fairly* derived from the verb *to corrupt*, as from the verb to *sink down*, and, indeed, *more* naturally and *more* obviously. The grammatical form would rather suggest this derivation than the other. (2) It *is* a fair construction of the original word. It is such a construction as may be put upon it without any *forced* application, or any design to defend a theory or an opinion. In other words, it is not a mere *catch*, or a grasp at a *possible* meaning of the word, but it is a rendering which, on every principle of grammatical construction, may be regarded as a *fair* interpretation. Whatever may have been the exact idea in the mind of David, whether he understood this as referring only to himself, and to the belief that he would not *always* remain in the grave, and under the power of corruption; or whether he understood it as referring primarily to himself, and ultimately and mainly to the Messiah; or whether he understood it as referring solely to the Messiah; or whether he did not at all understand the language which the Holy Spirit led him to employ (comp. Notes on 1 Pet. i. 11, 12), it is equally true that the sense which the apostles put on the words, in their application of the passage to the Messiah, is a suitable one. (3) The ancient versions, as has been seen above, confirm this. Without an exception they give the sense of *corruption*—the very sense which has been given to the word by Peter and Paul. The authors of these versions had no theory to defend, and it may be presumed that they had a just knowledge of the true meaning of the Hebrew word. (4) It may be added that this interpretation accords with the connexion in which the word occurs. Though it may be admitted that the connexion would not *necessarily* lead to this view, yet this interpretation is in entire harmony with the statements in the previous verses, and in the following verse. Thus, in the previous verse, the psalmist had said that "his flesh would rest in hope,"—a sentiment which *accords* with either the idea that he would at some future period be raised from the grave, and would not perish for ever, though the period of the resurrection might be remote; or with the idea of being raised up so soon that the body would not return to corruption, *i. e.*, before the change consequent on death would take place. The sentiment in the following verse also agrees with this view. That sentiment is, that there is a path to life; that in the presence of God there is fulness of joy; that at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore—a sentiment, in this connexion, founded on the belief of the resurrection from the dead, and equally true whether the dead should be raised immediately or at some remote period. I infer, therefore, that the apostles Peter and Paul made a legitimate use of this passage; that the argument which they urged was derived from a proper interpretation of the language; that the fair construction of the psalm, and the fact that David *had* returned to corruption, fully justified them in the application which they made of the passage; and that, therefore, it was the design of the Holy Spirit to convey the idea that *the Messiah* would be raised from the dead without undergoing the change which others undergo in the grave; and that it was thus *predicted* in the Old Testament, that he *would be* raised from

11 Thou wilt show me the path [u] of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; [v] at thy right hand *there are* pleasures [x] for evermore.

[u] Matt. vii. 14. [v] Matt. xxv. 33. [w] Jude 24. [x] Psa. xxxvi. 8.

the dead in the manner in which he was.

11. *Thou wilt show me the path of life.* In this connexion this means that though he was to die,—to descend to the regions of the dead, and to lie down in the dark grave,—yet there *was* a path again to the living world, and that that path would be pointed out to him by God. In other words, he would not be suffered to remain among the dead, or to wander away for ever with those who were in the under world, but he would be brought back to the *living* world. This is language which, in this connexion, could be founded only on a belief of the resurrection of the dead. The word "life" here does not necessarily refer to heaven—to eternal life—though the connexion shows that this is the ultimate idea. It is life in contradistinction from the condition of the dead. The highest form of life is that which is found in heaven, at the right hand of God; and the connexion shows it was that on which the eye of the psalmist was fixed. ¶ *In thy presence.* Literally, "with thy face." Before thy face; or, as the sense is correctly expressed in our version, *in thy presence.* The reference is to God's presence in heaven, or where he is supposed to dwell. This is shown by the additional statement that the joy mentioned was to be found at his "right hand"—an expression which properly refers to heaven. It is not merely a return to earth which is anticipated; it is an exaltation to heaven. ¶ Is *fulness of joy.* Not partial joy; not imperfect joy; not joy intermingled with pain and sorrow; not joy which, though in itself real, does not satisfy the desires of the soul, as is the case with much of the happiness which we experience in this life,—but joy, full, satisfying, unalloyed, unclouded, unmingled with anything that would diminish its fulness or its brightness; joy that will not be diminished, as all earthly joys must be, by the feeling that it must soon come to an end. ¶ *At thy right hand.* The right hand is the place of honour (Notes, ver. 8). Comp. Mark xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3; Acts vii. 56; and it here refers to the place which the saints will occupy in heaven. This language could have been used only by one who believed in the doctrine of the resurrection and of the future state. As applicable to the author of the psalm, it implies that he had a firm belief in the resurrection of the dead, and a confident hope of happiness hereafter; as applicable to the Messiah, it denotes that he would be raised up to exalted honour in heaven; as applicable to believers now, it expresses their firm and assured faith that eternal happiness and exalted honour await them in the future world. ¶ There are *pleasures for evermore.* Happiness that will be eternal. It is not enjoyment such as we have on earth, which we feel is soon to terminate; it is joy which can have no end. Here, in respect to any felicity which we enjoy, we cannot but feel that it is soon to cease. No matter how secure the sources of our joy may seem to be, we know that happiness here cannot last long, for life cannot long continue; and even though life should be lengthened out for many years, we have no certainty that our happiness will be commensurate even with our existence on earth. The dearest friend that we have may soon leave us to return no more; health, the source of so many comforts, and essential to the enjoyment of any comfort here, may soon fail; property, however firmly it may be secured, may "take to itself wings and fly away." Soon, at any rate, if these things do not leave us, we shall leave them; and in respect to happiness from them, we shall be as though

PSALM XVII.

A Prayer of David.

HEAR [1] the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* [2] not out of feigned lips.

[1] *justice.*
[2] *without lips of deceit.*

they had not been. Not so will it be at the right hand of God. Happiness there, whatever may be its nature, will be eternal. Losses, disappointment, bereavement, sickness, can never occur there; nor can the anticipation of death, though at the most distant period, and after countless millions of ages, ever mar our joys. How different in all these things will heaven be from earth! How desirable to leave the earth, and to enter on those eternal joys!

PSALM XVII.

This psalm is entitled "A Prayer of David." By whom the title was prefixed to it, is not known; but there can be no doubt of its appropriateness. It *is*, throughout, *a prayer*—fervent, earnest, believing. It was evidently uttered in the view of danger—danger arising from the number and the designs of his enemies; but on what particular occasion it was composed cannot now be determined. There were many occasions, however, in the life of David for the utterance of such a prayer, and there can be no doubt that in the dangers which so frequently beset him, he often poured out such warm and earnest appeals to God for help. *Who* the enemies referred to were cannot now be ascertained. All that is known of them is that they were "deadly" or bitter foes, that they were prosperous in the world, and that they were proud (vers. 9, 10); that they were fierce and greedy, like a lion hunting its prey (ver. 12); that they were men whose families were in affluence, and men who lived for this world alone, ver. 14.

The points which constitute the prayer in the psalm are the following:—

1. The prayer itself, as an earnest appeal or supplication to God to do what was equal and right, vers. 1, 2.

2. A reference of the author of the psalm to himself, and to his own life and character, as not deserving the treatment which he was receiving from others, vers. 3, 4.

3. An earnest petition on this ground for the Divine interposition, vers. 5-9.

4. A description of the character of his enemies, and a prayer on the ground of that character, that God would interpose for him, vers. 10-14.

5. The expression of a confident hope of deliverance from *all* enemies; a looking forward to a world where he would be rescued from *all* troubles, and where, in the presence of God, and entering on a new life, he would awake in the likeness of God and be satisfied, ver. 15. The psalm terminates, as the anticipations of all good men do amid the troubles of this life, in the hope of that world where there will be no trouble, and where they will be permitted to dwell for ever with God.

1. *Hear the right.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *justice.* The prayer is, that God would regard that which was *right* in the case, or that he would vindicate the psalmist from that which was wrong. It is the expression of his confident assurance even in the presence of God that his cause was right, and that he was asking only that which it would be consistent for a *just* God to do. We can offer an acceptable prayer only when we are sure that it would be right for God to answer it, or that it would be consistent with perfect and eternal justice to grant our requests. It is to be observed here, however, that the ground of the petition of the psalmist is not that *he* was righteous, that is, he did not base his petition on the ground of his own merits, but that his *cause* was righteous; that he was unjustly oppressed and persecuted by his enemies. We cannot ask God to interpose in our behalf because we have a claim to his favour on the ground of our own merit; we may ask him to interpose because wrong is done, and his glory will be promoted in securing that which is just and right. ¶ *Attend unto my cry.* The word here used—רִנָּה, *rinnah*—means either a shout of joy, Ps. xxx. 5; xlii. 4; xlvii. 1; or a mournful cry,

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

3 Thou hast proved *y* mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the

y Psa. cxxxix. 23.

outcry, wailing, Ps. lxi. 1; *et sæpe.* It is expressive, in either case, of deep feeling which vents itself in an audible manner. Here it denotes the earnest *utterance* of prayer. ¶ *Give ear unto my prayer.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1. ¶ That goeth *not out of feigned lips.* Marg., as in Heb., *without lips of deceit.* That is, that is sincere, or that proceeds from the heart. The utterance of the lips does not misrepresent the feelings of the heart. True prayer is that in which the lips *do* represent the real feelings of the soul. In hypocritical prayer the one is no proper representation of the other. It is evident that the prayer here was not mere *mental* prayer, or a *mere* desire of the heart. It was *uttered* prayer, or *oral* prayer; and, though private, it was in the form of uttered words. The feeling was so great that it was expressed in an audible cry to God. Deep emotion usually finds vent in such audible and fervent expressions. Compare the Saviour's earnest prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Luke xxii. 41, seq.

2. *Let my sentence.* Heb., *my judgment.* The allusion is to a judgment or sentence as coming from God in regard to the matter referred to in the psalm, to wit, the injuries which he had received from his enemies. He felt that they had done him injustice and wrong; he felt assured that a sentence or judgment from God in the case would be in his favour. So Job often felt that if he could bring his case d rectly before God, God would decide in his favour. Comp. Job xxiii. 1—6. ¶ *Come forth from thy presence.* From before thee. That is, he asks God to pronounce a sentence in his case. ¶ *Let thine eyes behold.* He asked God to examine the case with his own eyes, or attentively to consider it, and to see where justice was. ¶ *The things that are equal.* The things that are just and right. He felt assured that his own cause was right, and he prays here that justice in the case may be done. He felt that, if that were done, he would be delivered from his enemies. As between ourselves and our fellow-men, it is right to pray to God that he would see that exact justice should be done, for we may be able to feel certain that justice is on our side, and that we are injured by them; but as between ourselves and God, we can never offer that prayer, for if justice were done to us we could not but be condemned. Before him our plea must be for mercy, not justice.

3. *Thou hast proved mine heart.* In this verse he refers to his own character and life in the matter under consideration, or the consciousness of his own innocence in respect to his fellow-men who are persecuting and opposing him. He appeals to the Great Searcher of hearts in proof that, in this respect, he was innocent; and he refers to different forms of trial on the part of God to show that after the most thorough search he would find, and did find, that in these respects he was an innocent man, and that his enemies had no occasion to treat him as they had done. It is still to be borne in mind here that the trial which the psalmist asks at the hand of God was not to prove that he was innocent towards *Him*, or that he had a claim to His favour on account of his own personal holiness, but it was that he was innocent of any wrong towards those who were persecuting him, or, in other words, that after the most searching trial, even by his Maker, it would be found that he had given *them* no cause for treating him thus. The word here rendered "proved" means *to try, to prove, to examine,*—especially metals, to test their genuineness. See Notes on Ps. vii. 9, 10;

night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing: I am purposed *that* my mouth [z] shall not transgress.

4 Concerning the works of men, by the [a] word of thy lips I

z Psa. xxxix. 1, 2; Prov. xiii. 3.

a Prov. ii. 10—15.

Job xii. 11. The psalmist here says that God had tried or searched *his heart*. He knew all his motives. He had examined all his desires and his thoughts. The psalmist felt assured that, after the most thorough trial, even *God* would not find anything in his heart that would justify the conduct of his enemies towards him. ¶ *Thou hast visited* me. That is, for the purpose of inspecting my character, or of examining me. The English word *visit*, like the Hebrew, is often used to denote a visitation for the purpose of inspection and examination. The idea is, that God had come to him for the very purpose of *examining* his character. ¶ *In the night.* In solitude. In darkness. When I was alone. In the time when the thoughts are less under restraint than they are when surrounded by others. In a time when it can be seen what we really *are;* when we do not put on appearances to deceive others. ¶ *Thou hast tried me.* The word here used — צָרַף, *tzaraph* — means properly *to melt, to smelt,* &c., metals, or separating the pure metal from the dross. The meaning is, that God, in examining into his character, had subjected him to a trial as searching as that employed in purifying metals by casting them into the fire. ¶ And *shalt find nothing.* Thou wilt find nothing that could give occasion for the conduct of my enemies. The future tense is here used to denote that, even if the investigation were continued, God would find nothing in his heart or in his conduct that would warrant their treatment of him. He had the most full and settled determination *not* to do wrong to them in any respect whatever. Nothing *had* been found in him that would justify their treatment of him; he was determined so to live, and he felt assured that he would so live, that nothing of the kind *would* be found in him in time to come. ¶ *I am purposed.* I am fully resolved. ¶ *My mouth shall not transgress.* Transgress the law of God, or go beyond what is right. That is, I will utter nothing which is wrong, or which can give occasion for their harsh and unkind treatment. Much as he had been provoked and injured, he was determined not to retaliate, or to give occasion for their treating him in the manner in which they were now doing. Prof. Alexander renders this "My mouth shall not exceed my thought;" but the common version gives a better idea, and is sanctioned by the Hebrew. Comp. Gesenius, *Lex.*

4. *Concerning the works of men.* In respect to the works or doings of men. The reference is here probably to the ordinary or common doings of mankind, or to what generally characterises the conduct of men. As their conduct is so commonly, and so characteristically wicked, wickedness may be spoken of as their "work," and it is to this doubtless that the psalmist refers. In respect to the sinful courses or "paths" to which men are so prone, he says that he had kept himself from them. This is in accordance with what he says in the previous verse, that he had given no occasion by his conduct for the treatment which he had received at the hands of his enemies. ¶ *By the word of thy lips.* Not by his own strength; not by any power which he himself had, but by the commands and promises of God,— by what had proceeded from *his* mouth. The reference is doubtless to *all* that God had spoken:—to the law which prescribed his duty, and to the promises which God had given to enable him to walk in the path of uprightness. He had relied on the word of God as inculcating duty; he had submitted to it

have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.

5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps [1] slip not.

[1] *be not moved.*

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and hear* my speech.

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as authority; he had found encouragement in it in endeavouring to do right. ¶ *I have kept* me. I have preserved myself. I have so guarded my conduct that I have not fallen into the sins which are so common among men. ¶ *The paths of the destroyer.* The paths which the "destroyer" treads; the course of life which such men lead. The idea is, not that he had been able to save himself from violence at their hands, but that he had been enabled to avoid their mode of life. The word rendered *destroyer* is from a verb which means *to break, to rend, to scatter,* and would properly refer to acts of violence and lawlessness. He had kept himself from the modes of life of the violent and the lawless; that is, he had been enabled to lead a peaceful and quiet life. He had given no occasion to his enemies to treat him as a violent, a lawless, a wicked man.

5. *Hold up my goings in thy paths.* He had been enabled before this to keep himself from the ways of the violent by the word of God (ver. 4); he felt his dependence on God still to enable him, in the circumstances in which he was placed, and under the provocations to which he was exposed, to live a life of peace, and to keep himself from doing wrong. He, therefore, calls on God, and asks him to sustain him, and to keep him still in the right path. The verb here used is in the infinitive form, but used instead of the imperative. *De Wette.*—Prof. Alexander renders this less correctly, "My steps have laid hold of thy paths;" for he supposes that a prayer here "would be out of place." But prayer can never be *more* appropriate than when a man realises that he owes the fact of his having been hitherto enabled to lead an upright life only to the "word" of God, and when provoked and injured by others he feels that he might be in danger of doing wrong. In such circumstances nothing can be more proper than to call upon God to keep us from sin. ¶ That *my footsteps slip not.* Marg., as in Heb., *be not moved.* The idea is, "that I may be firm; that I may not yield to passion; that, provoked and wronged by others, I may not be allowed to depart from the course of life which I have been hitherto enabled to pursue." No prayer could be more appropriate. When we feel and know that we have been wronged by others; when our lives have given no cause for such treatment as we receive at their hands; when they are still pursuing us, and injuring us in our reputation, our property, or our peace; when all the bad passions of our nature are liable to be aroused, prompting us to seek revenge, and to return evil for evil, then nothing can be more proper than for us to lift our hearts to God, entreating that *he* will keep us, and save us from falling into sin; that he will enable us to restrain our passions, and to subdue our resentments.

6. *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God.* The meaning of this is, "I have called on thee heretofore, and will do it still, because I am certain that thou wilt hear me." That is, he was encouraged to call upon God by the conviction that he would hear his prayer, and would grant his request. In other words, he came to God in faith; in the full belief of his readiness to answer prayer, and to bestow needed blessings. Comp. John xi. 42; Heb. xi. 6. ¶ *Incline thine ear unto me.* See Notes on ver. 1. ¶ *My speech.* My prayer. The reference here, as in ver. 1, is to prayer *uttered* before God, and not mere mental prayer.

7 Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest [1] by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them.*

[1] Or, *them which trust* in thee *from those that rise up against thy right hand.*

8 Keep me as the apple of the

7. *Show thy marvellous loving-kindness.* The literal translation of the original here would be, "*distinguish thy favours.*" The Hebrew word used means properly *to separate; to distinguish;* then, *to make distinguished* or *great.* The prayer is, that God would *separate* his mercies on this occasion from his ordinary mercies by the manifestation of greater powers, or by showing him special favour. The ordinary or common mercies which he was receiving at the hand of God would not meet the present case. His dangers were much greater than ordinary, his wants were more pressing than usual; and he asked for an interposition of mercy corresponding with his circumstances and condition. Such a prayer it is obviously proper to present before God; that is, it is right to ask him to suit his mercies to our peculiar necessities; and when special dangers surround us, when we are assailed with peculiarly strong temptations, when we have unusually arduous duties to perform, when we are pressed down with peculiarly severe trials, it is right and proper to ask God to bestow favours upon us which will correspond with our peculiar circumstances. His ability and his willingness to aid us are not measured by our ordinary requirements, but are equal to any of the necessities which can ever occur in our lives. ¶ *O thou that savest by thy right hand.* Marg., "*that savest those that trust* in thee *from those that rise up against thy right hand.*" The Hebrew will admit of either construction, though that in the text is the more correct. It is, literally, "Saving those trusting, from those that rise up, with thy right hand. The idea is, that it was a characteristic of God, or that it was what he usually did, to save by his own power those that trusted him from those who rose up against them. That is, God might be appealed to to do this now, on the ground that he was *accustomed* to do it; and that, so to speak, he would be acting "in character" in doing it. In other words, we may ask God to do what he is accustomed to do; we may go to him in reference to his well-known attributes and character, and ask him to act in a manner which will be but the regular and proper manifestation of his nature. We could not ask him to do what was contrary to his nature; we cannot ask him to act in a way which would be *out of character.* What he has done for men always, we may ask him to do for us; what is entirely consistent with his perfections, we may ask him to do in our own case. ¶ *By thy right hand.* By thy power. The right hand is that by which we execute our purposes, or put forth our power; and the psalmist asks God to put forth his power in defending him. See Isa. xli. 10; Job xl. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 13. ¶ *From those that rise up* against them. From their enemies.

8. *Keep me as the apple of the eye.* Preserve me; guard me; defend me, as one defends that which is to him most precious and valuable. In the original there is a remarkable strength of expression, and at the same time a remarkable confusion of gender in the language. The literal translation would be, "Keep me as the little man—the daughter of the eye." The word *apple* applied to the eye means the *pupil,* the little aperture in the middle of the eye, through which the rays of light pass to form an image on the retina (*Johnson, Webster*); though *why* it is called the *apple* of the eye the lexicographers fail to tell us. The Hebrew word—אִישׁוֹן, *Ishon*—means properly, *a little man,* and is given to the apple or pupil of the eye, "in which, as in a mirror, a person sees

eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

9 From the wicked that [1] oppress me, *from* my [2] deadly enemies *who* compass me about.

[1] *waste.*

10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

11 They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set

[2] *enemies against the soul.*

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his own image reflected in miniature." This comparison is found in several languages. The word occurs in the Old Testament only in Deut. xxxii. 10; Ps. xvii. 8; Prov. vii. 2; where it is rendered *apple;* in Prov. vii. 9, where it is rendered *black;* and in Prov. xx. 20, where it is rendered *obscure.* The other expression in the Hebrew—"*the daughter* of the eye"—is derived from a usage of the Hebrew word *daughter,* as denoting that which is dependent on, or connected with (*Gesenius, Lex.*), as the expression "daughters of a city" denotes the small towns or villages lying around a city, and dependent on its jurisdiction, Num. xxi. 25, 32; xxxii. 42; Josh. xvii. 11. So the expression *daughters of song,* Eccl. xii. 4. The idea here is, that the little image is the *child* of the eye; that it has its birth or origin there. The prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would guard him, as one guards his sight—an object so dear and valuable to him. ¶ *Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.* Another image denoting substantially the same thing. This is taken from the care evinced by fowls in protecting their young, by gathering them under their wings. Comp. Matt. xxiii. 37. Both of the comparisons here used are found in Deut. xxxii. 10—12; and it is probable that the psalmist had that passage in his eye—"He instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye; as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him." Comp. also Ps. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; lxiii. 7; xci. 1, 4.

9. *From the wicked that oppress me.* Marg., *That waste me.* The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The idea is that of being wasted, desolated, destroyed, as a city or country is by the ravages of war. The psalmist compares himself in his troubles with such a city or country. The *effect* of the persecutions which he had endured had been like cities and lands thus laid waste by fire and sword. ¶ From *my deadly enemies.* Marg., *My enemies against the soul.* The literal idea is, "enemies against my life." The common translation expresses the idea accurately. The sense is, that his enemies sought his life. ¶ Who *compass me about.* Who surround me on every side, as enemies do who besiege a city.

10. *They are inclosed in their own fat.* The meaning here is, that they were prosperous, and that they were consequently self-confident and proud, and were regardless of others. The phrase occurs several times as descriptive of the wicked in a state of prosperity, and as, therefore, insensible to the rights, the wants, and the sufferings of others. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him," etc. Job xv. 27, "Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks." Ps. lxxiii. 7, "Their eyes stand out with fatness." Ps. cxix. 70, "Their heart is as fat as grease." ¶ *With their mouth they speak proudly.* Haughtily; in an arrogant tone; as a consequence of their prosperity.

11. *They have now compassed us.* Myself, and those who are associated with me. It would seem from this that the psalmist was not alone. It is to be observed, however, that there is a difference of reading in the Hebrew

their eyes bowing down to the earth;

12 [1] Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion [2] lurking in secret places.

13 Arise, O LORD, [3] disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my

[1] *The likeness of him* (that is, *of every one of them*) is *as a lion* that *desireth to ravin.*

[2] *sitting.* [3] *prevent his face.*

text. The Masoretic reading is *us*; the Hebrew text is *me*, though in the other expression the plural is used—"*our* steps." There is no impropriety in supposing that the psalmist refers to his followers, associates, or friends, meaning that the wrong was done not to him alone, but to others connected with him. The meaning of *compassed* is, that they *surrounded* him on every side. Wherever he went, they were there. ¶ *In our steps.* Wherever we go. ¶ *They have set their eyes.* As those do who are intent on any thing; as the lion does that is seeking its prey (ver. 12). They looked keenly and directly at the object. They did not allow their eyes to wander. They were not indifferent to the object of their pursuit. ¶ *Bowing down to the earth.* That is, as the translators evidently understood this, having their *eyes* bowed down to the ground, or looking steadily to the ground. The image, according to Bishop Horsley, is borrowed from a hunter taking aim at an animal upon the ground. A more literal translation, however, would be, "They have fixed their eyes to lay me prostrate upon the ground." The Hebrew word—נָטָה, *natah*—means properly *to stretch out, to extend;* then, *to incline, to bow, to depress;* and hence the idea of *prostrating;* thus, to make the shoulder bend downwards, Gen. xlix. 15; to bring down the mind to an object, Ps. cxix. 112; to bow the heavens, Psa. xviii. 9. Hence the idea of prostrating an enemy; and the sense here clearly is, that they had fixed their eyes intently on the psalmist, with a purpose to prostrate him to the ground, or completely to overwhelm him.

12. *Like as a lion.* Marg., *The likeness of him* (that is, *of every one of them*) is *as a lion* that *desireth to ravin.* The meaning is plain. They were like a lion intent on securing his prey. They watched the object narrowly; they were ready to spring upon it. ¶ That *is greedy of his prey.* "He is craving to tear." *Professor Alexander.*—The Hebrew word rendered "*is greedy,*" means *to pine, to long after, to desire greatly.* The Hebrew word rendered "of his prey," is a verb, meaning *to pluck, to tear, to rend in pieces.* The reference is to the lion that desires to seize his victim, and to rend it in pieces to devour it. ¶ *And, as it were, a young lion,* Hebrew, "And like a young lion." ¶ *Lurking in secret places.* Marg., as in Heb., *sitting.* The allusion is to the lion crouching, or lying in wait for a favourable opportunity to pounce upon his prey. See Notes on Ps. x. 8–10. There is no special emphasis to be affixed to the fact that the "*lion*" is alluded to in one member of this verse, and the "*young lion*" in the other. It is in accordance with the custom of parallelism in Hebrew poetry where the same idea, with some little variation, is expressed in both members of the sentence. See Introduction to Job, § 5.

13. *Arise, O* LORD. See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. ¶ *Disappoint him.* Marg., *prevent his face.* The marginal reading expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The word used in the original means *to anticipate, to go before, to prevent;* and the prayer here is that God would come *before* his enemies; that is, that he would cast himself in their way *before* they should reach him. The enemy is represented as marching upon him with his face intently fixed, seeking his destruction; and he prays that God would interpose, or that He would come to his aid *before* his

soul from the wicked, [1] *which is* thy [c] sword:

14 From men [2] *which are* thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this* [d] life, and whose belly thou

[1] Or, *by thy.* [c] Isa. x. 5.

[2] by *thine.* [d] Luke xvi. 25.

enemy should come up to him. ¶ *Cast him down.* That is, as it is in the Hebrew, make him bend or bow, as one who is conquered bows before a conqueror. ¶ *Deliver my soul from the wicked.* Save my life; save me from the designs of the wicked. ¶ Which is *thy sword.* The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, "Deliver my soul from the wicked man, who deserves to be slain with thy sword." The Latin Vulgate, "Deliver my soul from the wicked man; thy spear from the enemies of thy hand." So the LXX., "Deliver my soul from the wicked; thy sword from the enemies of thy hand." The Syriac, "Deliver my soul from the wicked, and from the sword." De Wette renders it, "Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword." Prof. Alexander, "Save my soul from the wicked (with) thy sword." So Luther, "With thy sword." The Hebrew will undoubtedly admit of this latter construction, as in a similar passage in ver. 10 of this psalm; and this construction is found in the margin: "By thy sword." The sentiment that the wicked *are* the "sword" of God, or the instruments, though unconsciously to themselves, of accomplishing his purposes, or that he makes them the executioners of his will, is undoubtedly favoured by such passages as Isa. x. 5—7 (see Notes on those verses), and should be properly recognised. But such a construction is not necessary in the place before us, and it does not well agree with the connexion, for it is not easy to see why the psalmist should make the fact that the wicked were instruments in the hand of God in accomplishing his purposes a *reason* why He should interpose and deliver him from them. It seems to me, therefore, that the construction of De Wette and others, "Save me from the wicked *by* thy sword," is the true one. The psalmist asked that God would interfere by his own hand, and save him from danger. The same construction, if it be the correct one, is required in the following verse.

14. *From men* which are *thy hand.* Marg., *From men* by *thy hand.* Here the rendering in the common version would be still more harsh than in the previous verse, since it is at least unusual to call men "the hand" of God, in the sense that they are his instruments in accomplishing his purposes. The more obvious construction is to regard it as a prayer that God would deliver him by his own hand from *men*—from men that rose up against him. Comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. ¶ *From men of the world.* A better construction of this would be "from men; from the world." The psalmist prays first that he may be delivered from men by the hand of God. He then *repeats* the prayer, "from men, I say," and then adds, "from the world." He desires to be rescued entirely from such worldly plans, devices, purposes;—from men among whom nothing but worldly principles prevail. ¶ Which have *their portion in* this *life.* Their portion—their lot—is among *the living;* that is, they have nothing to look forward to—to hope for in the world to come. They are, therefore, governed wholly by worldly principles. They have no fear of God; they have no regard to the rights of others further than will be in accordance with their own worldly interest. Men whose portion is wholly in this life will make everything subordinate to their worldly interests. ¶ *And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid* treasure. The meaning of this portion of the verse is that, in respect to the object for which they lived, they were successful. They lived only for the world, and they obtained what the

fillest with thy hid *treasure*: [1] they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.

[1] Or, *their children are full.*

15 As for me, I will behold thy [e] face in righteousness: I

e 1 John iii. 2.

world had to bestow. They *had* prosperity in their purposes in life. The word "*hid*" here — *hid treasure* —means that which is hoarded, secreted, carefully guarded; and the word commonly refers to the practice of secreting from public view valuable treasures, as silver and gold. It is possible, however, that the reference here is to the fact that God has hidden these objects in the depths of the earth, and that it is necessary to *search* for them carefully if men would obtain them. Comp. Job xxviii. 1—11. The phrase "whose belly thou hast filled" means that their appetite or cravings in this respect were satisfied. They had what they wanted. ¶ *They are full of children.* Marg., *their children are full.* The margin probably expresses the sense of the Hebrew better than the text. The literal rendering would be, "satisfied are their sons;" that is, they have enough to satisfy the wants of their children. The expression "they are full of children" is harsh and unnatural, and is not demanded by the original, or by the main thought in the passage. The obvious signification is, that they have enough for themselves and for their children. ¶ *And leave the rest of their* substance *to their babes.* That is, what remains after their own wants are supplied, they leave to their babes. They not only have enough for the supply of their own wants and the wants of their children during their own lives, but they also leave an inheritance to their children after they are dead. The word rendered *babes* properly means little children, though it seems here to be used as denoting children in general. The meaning is, that they are able to provide for their children after they themselves are dead. Compare the description of worldly prosperity in Job xxi. 7—11.

15. *As for me.* In strong contrast with the aims, the desires, and the condition of worldly men. *They* seek their portion in this life, and are satisfied; *I* cherish no such desires, and have no such prosperity. I look to another world as my home, and shall be satisfied only in the everlasting favour and friendship of God. ¶ *I will behold thy face.* I shall see thee. Comp. Matt. v. 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2. This refers naturally, as the closing part of the verse more fully shows, to the future world, and is such language as would be employed by those who believe in a future state, and by no others. This is the highest object before the mind of a truly religious man. The bliss of heaven consists mainly, in his apprehension, in the privilege of seeing God his Saviour; and the hope of being permitted to do this is of infinitely more value to him than would be all the wealth of this world. ¶ *In righteousness.* Being myself righteous; being delivered from the power, the pollution, the dominion of sin. It is this which makes heaven so desirable; without this, in the apprehension of a truly good man, no place would be heaven. ¶ *I shall be satisfied.* While *they* are satisfied with this world, I shall be satisfied only when I awake in the likeness of my God. Nothing can meet the wants of my nature; nothing can satisfy the aspirings of my soul, until that occurs. ¶ *When I awake.* This is language which would be employed only by one who believed in the resurrection of the dead, and who was accustomed to speak of death as a *sleep*—a calm repose in the hope of awaking to a new life. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvi. 9-11. Some have understood this as meaning "when I awake to-morrow;" and they thence infer that this was an evening song (comp. Ps. iv. 8); others have supposed that it had a more general sense,—mean-

shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

ing "*whenever* I awake;" that is, while men of the world rejoice in their worldly possessions, and while this is the first thought which they have on awaking in the morning, *my* joy when I awake is in God;—in the evidence of his favour and friendship;—in the consciousness that I resemble him. I am surprised to find that Professor Alexander favours this view. Even De Wette admits that it refers to the resurrection of the dead, and that the psalm can be interpreted only on the supposition that it has this reference, and hence he argues that it could not have been composed by David, but that it must have been written in the time of the Exile, when that doctrine had obtained currency among the Hebrews. The interpretation above suggested seems to me to be altogether too low a view to be taken of the sense of the passage. It does not meet the state of mind described in the psalm. It does not correspond with the deep anxieties which the psalmist expressed as springing from the troubles which surrounded him. He sought repose from those troubles; he looked for consolation when surrounded by bitter and unrelenting enemies. He was oppressed and crushed with these many sorrows. Now it would do little to meet that state of mind, and to impart to him the consolation which he needed, to reflect that he could lie down in the night and awake in the morning with the consciousness that he enjoyed the friendship of God, for he had that already; and besides this, so far as this source of consolation was concerned, he would awake to a renewal of the same troubles to-morrow which he had met on the previous day. He needed some higher, some more enduring and efficient consolation; something which would meet *all* the circumstances of the case; some source of peace, composure, and rest, which was beyond all this; something which would have an existence where there was *no* trouble or anxiety;—and this could be found only in a future world. The obvious interpretation of the passage, therefore, so far as its sense can be determined from the connexion, is to refer it to the awaking in the morning of the resurrection; and there is nothing in the language itself, or in the known sentiments of the psalmist, to forbid this interpretation. The word rendered *awake*—קִיַץ, *kootz*—used only in Hiphil, means *to awake;*—to awake from sleep, Ps. iii. 5; cxxxix. 18; or from death, 2 Kings iv. 31; Jer. li. 39; Isa. xxvi. 19; Job xiv. 12; Dan. xii. 2. ¶ *With thy likeness.* Or, *in* thy likeness; that is, resembling thee. The resemblance doubtless is in the moral character, for the highest hope of a good man is that he may be, and will be, like God. Comp. Notes on 1 John iii. 2. I regard this passage, therefore, as one of the incidental proofs scattered through the Old Testament which show that the sacred writers under that dispensation believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; that their language was often based on the knowledge and the belief of that doctrine, even when they did not expressly affirm it; and that in times of trouble, and under the consciousness of sin, they sought their highest consolation, as the people of God do now, from the hope and the expectation that the righteous dead will rise again, and that in a world free from trouble, from sin, and from death, they would live for ever in the presence of God, and find their supreme happiness in being made wholly like him.

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm is found, with some unimportant variations, in 2 Samuel xxii. In that history, as in the inscription of the psalm here, it is said to have been composed by David on the occasion when the Lord "delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." There can, therefore, be no

doubt that David was the author, nor can there be any as to the occasion on which it was composed. It is a song of victory, and is beyond doubt the most sublime ode that was ever composed on such an occasion. David, long pursued and harassed by foes who sought his life, at length felt that a complete triumph was obtained, and that he and his kingdom were safe, and he pours forth the utterances of a grateful heart for God's merciful and mighty interposition, in language of the highest sublimity, and with the utmost grandeur of poetic imagery. Nowhere else, even in the sacred Scriptures, are there to be found images more beautiful, or expressions more sublime, than those which occur in this psalm.

From the place which this psalm occupies in the history of the life of David (2 Sam. xxii.), it is probable that it was composed in the latter years of his life, though it occupies this early place in the Book of Psalms. We have no reason to believe that the principle adopted in the arrangement of the Psalms was to place them in chronological order; and we cannot determine why in that arrangement this psalm has the place which has been assigned to it; but we cannot well be mistaken in supposing that it was composed at a somewhat advanced period of the life of David, and that it was in fact among the last of his compositions. Thus in the Book of Samuel, it is placed (ch. xxii.) immediately preceding a chapter (xxiii.) which professes (ver. 1) to record "the last words of David." And thus in the title it is said to have been composed when "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of *all* his enemies," an event which occurred only at a comparatively late period of his life. The circumstance which is mentioned in the title—"and out of the hand of Saul"—does not necessarily conflict with this view, or make it necessary for us to suppose that it was composed immediately after his deliverance from the hand of Saul. To David, recording and recounting the great events of his life, that deliverance would occur as one of the most momentous and worthy of a grateful remembrance, for it was a deliverance which was the foundation of all his subsequent successes, and in which the Divine interposition had been most remarkable. At any time of his life it would be proper to refer to this as demanding special acknowledgment. Saul had been among the most formidable of all his enemies. The most distressing and harassing events of his life had occurred in the time of his conflicts with him. God's interpositions in his behalf had occurred in the most remarkable manner, in delivering him from the dangers of that period of his history. It was natural and proper, therefore, in a general song of praise, composed in view of *all* God's interpositions in his behalf, that he should refer particularly to those dangers and deliverances. This opinion, that the psalm was composed when David was aged, which seems so obvious, is the opinion of Jarchi and Kimchi, of Rosenmüller and De Wette. The strong imagery, therefore, in the psalm, describing mighty convulsions of nature (vers. 6-16), is to be understood, not as a literal description, but as narrating God's gracious interposition in the time of danger, *as if* the Lord had spoken to him out of the temple; *as if* the earth had trembled; *as if* its foundations had been shaken; *as if* a smoke had gone out of his nostrils; *as if* he had bowed the heavens and come down; *as if* he had thundered in the heavens, and had sent out hailstones and coals of fire, etc.

From the fact that there are variations, though not of an essential character, in the two copies of the psalm, it would seem not improbable that it had been revised by David himself, or by some other person, after it was first composed, and that one copy was used by the author of the Book of Samuel, and the other by the collector and arranger of the Book of Psalms. These variations are not important, and by no means change the essential character of the psalm. It is not very easy to see *why* they *were* made, if they were made designedly, or to account for them if they were not so made. They are such as the following: The introduction, or the title of it, is adapted, in the psalm before us, to the purposes for which it was designed, when it was admitted into the collection. "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words," etc. The first verse of Ps. xviii., "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," is not found in the psalm as it is in the Book of Samuel. The second verse of the psalm is, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." In Samuel, the corresponding passage is, "The Lord is

my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God of my rock, in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence." In ver. 4, the reading is, "The sorrows of death compassed me" etc.; in Samuel, "The waves of death compassed me." Similar variations, affecting the words, without materially affecting the sense, occur in vers. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, and 51, of the psalm.* See these passages arranged in Rosenmüller's Scholia, vol. i., pp. 451–458. In no instance is the sense very materially affected, though the variations are so numerous.

It is impossible now to account for these variations. Hammond, Kennicott, and others, suppose that they occurred from the errors of transcribers. But to this opinion Schultens opposes unanswerable objections. He refers particularly (*a*) to the multitude and variety of the changes; (*b*) to the condition or state of the codices; (*c*) to the nature of the variations, or to the fact that changes are made in words, and not merely in letters of similar forms which might be mistaken for each other. See his arguments in Rosenmüller, Schol., vol. i., pp. 441–443. It seems most probable, therefore, that these changes were made by design, and that it was done either by David, who revised the original composition, and issued two forms of the poem, one of which was inserted in the history in Samuel, and the other in the collection of the Psalms; or that the changes were made by the collector of the Psalms, when they were arranged for public worship. The former supposition is a possible one; though, as the psalm was composed near the close of the life of David, it would seem not to be very probable. The most natural supposition, therefore, is, that the changes were made by the collector of the Psalms, whoever he might be, or by the person who presided over this part of public worship in the temple, and that the changes were made for some reason which we cannot now understand, as better adapting the psalm to musical purposes. Doederlein supposes that the recension was made by some later poet, for the purpose of "polishing" the language; of giving it a more finished poetic form; and of adapting it better to public use; and he regards both forms as "genuine, elegant, sublime; the one more ancient, the other more polished and refined." It seems most probable that the changes were made with a view to some rhythmical or musical effect, or for the purpose of adapting the psalm to the music of the temple service. Such changes would depend on causes which could be now little understood, as we are not sufficiently acquainted with the music employed in public worship by the Hebrews, nor are we now competent to understand the effect which, in this respect, would be produced by a slight change of phraseology. Variations of a similar nature now exist in psalms and hymns which could not be well explained or understood by one who was not familiar with our language and with our music, and which, after as long an interval as that between the time when the Psalms were arranged for musical purposes and the present time, would be wholly unintelligible.

The psalm embraces the following subjects:—

I. A general acknowledgment of God, and thanks to him, as the Deliverer in the time of troubles, and as worthy to be praised, vers. 1–3.

II. A brief description of the troubles and dangers from which the psalmist had been rescued, vers. 4, 5.

III. A description, conceived in the highest forms of poetic language, of the Divine interposition in times of danger, vers. 6–19.

IV. A statement of the psalmist that this interposition was of such a nature as to vindicate his own character, or to show that his cause was a righteous cause; that he was right, and that his enemies had been in the wrong; that God approved his course, and disapproved the course of his enemies: or, in other words, that these interpositions were such as to prove that God was just, and would deal with men according to their character, vers. 20–30.

V. A recapitulation of what God had done for him, in enabling him to subdue his enemies, and a statement of the effect which he supposed would be produced on others by the report of what God had done in his behalf, vers. 31–45.

VI. A general expression of thanksgiving to God as the author of all these

* *i.e.*, after the notation in the Hebrew Psalter, which accords with the numbering of the verses *in Samuel*.

PSALM XVIII.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David, the servant *f* of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words *g* of this song in the day *that* the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

I WILL love *h* thee, O LORD, my strength.

f Psa. xxxvi., *title*. *g* 2 Sam. xxii. *h* 1 John iv. 19.

blessings, and as worthy of universal confidence and praise, vers. 46–50.

THE TITLE. ¶ *To the chief Musician.* See Notes to the title of Psalm iv. ¶ A Psalm *of David.* The words "A Psalm" are not here in the original, and may convey a slightly erroneous impression, as if the psalm had been composed for the express purpose of being used publicly in the worship of God. In the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii., it is described as a "Song" of David:—"And David spake unto the Lord the words of this *song.*" It was originally an expression of his private gratitude for God's distinguishing mercies, and was afterwards, as we have seen, probably adapted to purposes of public worship by some one of a later age. ¶ *The servant of the* LORD. This expression also is wanting in 2 Sam. xxii. It is undoubtedly an addition by a later hand, as indicating the general character which David had acquired, or as denoting the national estimate in regard to his character. The same expression occurs in the title to Ps. xxxvi. The Chaldee Paraphrase translates this title: "To be sung over the wonderful things which abundantly happened to the servant of the Lord, to David, who sang," etc. The use of the phrase here—"the servant of the Lord"—by him who made the collection of the Psalms, would seem to imply that he regarded the psalm as having a sufficiently public character to make it proper to introduce it into a collection designed for general worship. In other words, David was not, in the view of the author of the collection, a private man, but was eminently a public servant of Jehovah; and a song of grateful remembrance of God's mercies to him was entitled to be regarded as expressing the appropriate feelings of God's people in similar circumstances in all times. ¶ *Who spake unto the* LORD. Composed it as giving utterance to his feelings towards the Lord. ¶ *The words of this song in the day* that *the* LORD *delivered him.* When the Lord *had* delivered him; when he felt that he was completely rescued from *all* his foes. This does not mean that the psalm was composed on a particular day when God had by some one signal act rescued him from impending danger, but it refers to a calm period of his life, when he could review the past, and see that God had rescued him from *all* the enemies that had ever threatened his peace. This would probably, as has been suggested above, occur near the close of his life. ¶ *From the hand of all his enemies.* Out of the hand, or the power. There is here a *general* view of the mercy of God in rescuing him from *all* his foes. ¶ *And from the hand of Saul.* Saul had been one of his most formidable enemies, and the wars with him had been among the most eventful periods of the life of David. In a general review of his life, near its close, he would naturally recur to the dangers of that period, and to God's gracious interpositions in his behalf, and it would seem to him that what God had done for him in those times deserved a special record. The original word here—כַּף, *kaph*—is not the same as in the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii.—יָד, *yad*—though the idea is substantially the same. The word here used means properly the *palm* or *hollow* of the hand; the word used in Samuel means the hand itself. Why the change was made we have not the means of ascertaining. ¶ *And he said.* So 2 Sam. xxii. 2. What follows is what he said.

1. *I will love thee, O* LORD. This verse is not found in the song in 2 Sam. xxii. It appears to have been added after the first composition of the psalm, either by David as expressive of his ardent love for the Lord in view of his merciful interpositions in his behalf, and on the most careful and most mature review of those mercies, or by the collector of the Psalms when they were adapted to purposes of public worship, as a proper commencement of the psalm—expressive of the feeling which the general tenor of the psalm was fitted to inspire. It is impossible now to determine by

2 The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my [1] strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

[1] *rock.*

whom it was added; but no one can doubt that it is a proper commencement of a psalm that is designed to recount so many mercies. It is the feeling which all should have when they recall the goodness of God to them in their past lives. ¶ *My strength.* The source of my strength, or from whom all my strength is derived. So Ps. xxvii. 1, "The Lord is the strength of my life." Ps. xxviii. 8, "He is the saving strength of his anointed." Comp. Ps. xxix. 11; xlvi. 1; lxxiii. 26; lxxxi. 1; cxl. 7.

2. *The* LORD is *my rock.* The idea in this expression, and in the subsequent parts of the description, is that he owed his safety entirely to God. He had been unto him *as* a rock, a tower, a buckler, etc.—that is, he had derived from God the protection which a rock, a tower, a citadel, a buckler furnished to those who depended on them, or which they were designed to secure. The word "rock" here has reference to the fact that in times of danger a lofty rock would be sought as a place of safety, or that men would fly to it to escape from their enemies. Such rocks abound in Palestine; and by the fact that they are elevated and difficult of access, or by the fact that those who fled to them could find shelter behind their projecting crags, or by the fact that they could find security in their deep and dark caverns, they became places of refuge in times of danger; and protection was often found there when it could not be found in the plains below. Comp. Judges vi. 2; Ps. xxvii. 5; lxi. 2. Also, Jos. Ant., b. xiv., ch. xv. ¶ *And my fortress.* He has been to me *as* a fortress. The word *fortress* means a place of defence, a place so strengthened that an enemy could not approach it, or where one would be safe. Such fortresses were often constructed on the rocks or on hills, where those who fled thither would be doubly safe. Comp. Job xxxix. 28. See also Notes on Isa. xxxiii. 16. ¶ *And my deliverer.* Delivering or rescuing me from my enemies. ¶ *My God.* Who hast been to me a God; that is, in whom I have found all that is implied in the idea of *God*—a Protector, Helper, Friend, Father, Saviour. The notion or idea of a *God* is different from all other ideas, and David had found, as the Christian now does, all that is implied in that idea, in Jehovah, the living God. ¶ *My strength.* Marg., *My rock.* So the Hebrew, although the Hebrew word is different from that which is used in the former part of the verse. Both words denote that God was a refuge or protection, as a rock or crag is to one in danger (comp. Deut. xxxii. 37), though the exact difference between the words may not be obvious. ¶ *In whom I will trust.* That is, I have found him to be such a refuge that I *could* trust in him, and in view of the past I *will* confide in him always. ¶ *My buckler.* The word here used is the same which occurs in Ps. iii. 3, where it is translated *shield.* See Notes on that verse. ¶ *And the horn of my salvation.* The *horn* is to animals the means of their defence. Their strength lies in the horn. Hence the word is used here, as elsewhere, to represent that to which we owe our protection and defence in danger; and the idea here is, that God was to the psalmist what the horn is to animals, the means of his defence. Comp. Ps. xxii. 21; lxxv. 4, 5, 10; xcii. 10; cxxxii. 17; cxlviii. 14. ¶ And *my high tower.* He is to me what a high tower is to one who is in danger. Comp. Prov. xviii. 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The word here used occurs in Ps. ix. 9, where it is rendered "refuge." (Marg., *A high place.*) See Notes on that verse.

3 I will call upon the LORD *who is worthy* [i] to be praised: so [k] shall I be saved from mine enemies.

4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of [l] ungodly men made me afraid.

i Rev. v. 11—13. *k* Psa. l. 15. [l] *Belial.*

Such towers were erected on mountains, on rocks, or on the walls of a city, and were regarded as safe places mainly because they were inaccessible. So the old castles in Europe,—as that at Heidelberg, and generally those along the Rhine,—were built on lofty places, and in such positions as not to be easily accessible.

3. *I will call upon the* LORD. The idea here is, that he would constantly call upon the Lord. In all times of trouble and danger he would go to him, and invoke his aid. The experience of the past had been such as to lead him to put confidence in him in all time to come. He had learned to flee to him in danger, and he had never put his trust in him in vain. The idea is, that a proper view of God's dealings with us in the past should lead us to feel that we may put confidence in him in the future. ¶ *Who is worthy to be praised.* More literally, "Him who is to be praised I will call upon, Jehovah." The prominent—the leading thought is, that God is a being every way worthy of praise. ¶ *So shall I be saved from my enemies.* Ever onward, and at all times. He had had such ample experience of his protection that he could confide in him as one who would deliver him from all his foes.

4. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* Surrounded me. That is, he was in imminent danger of death, or in the midst of such pangs and sorrows as are supposed commonly to attend on death. He refers probably to some period in his past life—perhaps in the persecutions of Saul—when he was so beset with troubles and difficulties that it seemed to him that he must die. The word rendered *sorrows*—חֶבֶל, *hhebel*—means, according to Gesenius, *a cord, a rope,* and hence *a snare, gin, noose;* and the idea here is, according to Gesenius, that he was taken as it were in the snares of death, or in the bands of death. So Ps. cxvi. 3. Our translators, however, and it seems to me more correctly, regarded the word as derived from the same noun differently pointed—חֵבֶל, *hhaibel*—meaning *writhings, pangs, pains,* as in Isa. lxvi. 7; Jer. xiii. 21; xxii. 23; Hos. xiii. 13; Job xxxix. 3. So the Chaldee Paraphrase, "Pangs as of a woman in childbirth came around me." So the Vulgate, *dolores.* So the LXX., ὠδῖνες. The corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii. is, "The *waves* of death." The word which is used there—מִשְׁבָּר, *mishbar* — means properly waves which break upon the shore—*breakers.* See Ps. xlii. 7; lxxxviii. 7; Jonah ii. 3. Why the change was made in the psalm it is not possible to determine. Either word denotes a condition of great danger and alarm, as if death was inevitable. ¶ *And the floods of ungodly men.* Marg., as in Heb., *Belial.* The word *Belial* means properly *without use* or *profit;* and then worthless, abandoned, wicked. It is applied to wicked men as being *worthless* to society, and to all the proper ends of life. Though the term here undoubtedly refers to *wicked* men, yet it refers to them as being worthless or abandoned—low, vulgar, useless to mankind. The word rendered *floods*—נַחַל, *nahhal*—means in the singular, properly, a stream, brook, rivulet; and then, a torrent, as formed by rain and snow-water in the mountains, Job vi. 15. The word here used refers to such men as if they were poured forth in streams and torrents—in such multitudes that the psalmist was likely to be overwhelmed by them, as one would be by floods of water. ¶ *Made me afraid.* Made me apprehensive of losing my life. To what particular period of his life he here refers it is impossible now to determine.

5 The [1] sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before [l] him, *even* into his ears.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also

[1] Or, *cords.*

[l] 2 Chron. xxx. 27.

5. *The sorrows of hell.* Marg., *cords.* The word here used is the same which occurs in the previous verse, and which is there rendered *sorrows.* It is correctly translated here, as in that verse, *sorrows,* though the parallelism would seem to favour the interpretation in the margin,—*cords.* If it means *sorrows,* the idea is, that such sufferings encompassed him, or seized upon him, as we associate in idea with the descent to the under-world, or the going down to the dead. If it means *cords,* or *bands,* then the idea is, that he was seized with pain as if with cords thrown around him, and that were dragging him down to the abodes of the dead. Luther, De Wette, Prof. Alexander, Hengstenberg, and others render the word, in each of these places, *bands.* On the word here rendered *hell,* שְׁאוֹל, *Sheol,* see Notes on Isa. xiv. 9. It means here *the under-world, the regions of the dead.* It is a description of one who was overcome with the dread of death. ¶ *The snares of death.* The word *snares* refers to the gins, toils, nets, which are used in taking wild beasts, by suddenly throwing cords around them, and binding them fast. The idea here is, that *Death* had thus thrown around him its toils or snares, and had bound him fast. ¶ *Prevented me.* The word here used in Hebrew, as our word *prevent* did originally, means to *anticipate, to go before.* The idea here is that those snares had, as it were, suddenly rushed upon him, or seized him. They came before him in his goings, and bound him fast.

6. *In my distress.* This refers, most probably, not to any particular case, but rather indicates his general habit of mind, that when he was in deep distress and danger he had uniformly called upon the Lord, and had found him ready to help. ¶ *I called upon the* LORD. I prayed. That is, he invoked God to help him in his trouble. He relied not on his own strength; he looked not for human aid; he looked to God alone. ¶ *And cried unto my God.* The word used here denotes an earnest cry for help. Comp. Job xxxv. 9; xxxvi. 13. ¶ *He heard my voice out of his temple.* That is, he, being in his temple, heard my voice. The word rendered *temple* (comp. Notes on Ps. v. 7) cannot refer here to the temple at Jerusalem, for that was built after the death of David, but it refers either to *heaven,* considered as the temple, or dwelling-place of God, or to the *tabernacle,* considered as his abode on earth. The sense is not materially varied, whichever interpretation is adopted. Comp. Ps. xi. 4. ¶ *And my cry came before him.* He heard my cry. It was not intercepted on the way, but came up to him. ¶ Even *into his ears.* Indicating that he certainly heard it. Comp. Gen. xxiii. 10; xliv. 18; l. 4; Ex. x. 2: Ps. xxxiv. 15.

7. *Then the earth shook and trembled.* The description which follows here is one of the most sublime that is to be found in any language. It is taken from the fury of the storm and tempest, when all the elements are in commotion; when God seems to go forth in the greatness of his majesty and the terror of his power, to prostrate everything before him. We are not to regard this as descriptive of anything which literally occurred, but rather as expressive of the fact of the Divine interposition, *as if* he thus came forth in the greatness of his power. There is no improbability indeed in supposing that in some of the dangerous periods of

of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

8 There went up a smoke [1] out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed [m] the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet.

[1] *by.* [m] Psa. cxliv. 5, etc.

David's life, when surrounded by enemies, or even when in the midst of a battle, a furious tempest *may* have occurred that seemed to be a special Divine interposition in his behalf, but we have no distinct record of such an event, and it is not necessary to suppose that such an event occurred in order to a correct understanding of the passage. All that is needful is to regard this as a representation of the mighty interposition of God; to suppose that his intervention was as direct, as manifest, and as sublime, *as if* he had *thus* interposed. There are frequent references in the Scriptures to such storms and tempests as illustrative of the majesty, the power, and the glory of God, and of the manner in which he interposes on behalf of his people. See Ps. cxliv. 5–7; xlvi. 6–8; xxix.; Job xxxvii. 21–24; xxxviii. 1; Nahum i. 3; and particularly Habakkuk iii. 3–16. The description in Habakkuk strongly resembles the passage before us, and both were drawn doubtless from an actual observation of the fury of a tempest. ¶ *The foundations also of the hills moved.* The mountains seemed to rock on their foundations. In the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii. 8 the expression is, "The foundations *of heaven* moved and shook;" that is, that on which the heavens seem to rest was agitated. Many suppose that the expression refers to the mountains as if they bore up the heavens; but De Wette more properly supposes that the reference is to the heavens as a building or an edifice resting on foundations. Why the change was made in revising the psalm from the "foundations of *the heavens*" to the "foundations of *the hills*," it is impossible now to determine. ¶ *Because he was wroth.* Literally, "Because it was inflamed (or enkindled) to him;" that is, because he was angry. Anger is often compared to a raging flame, because it seems to consume everything before it. Hence we speak of it as *heated*, as *burning*. So we say of one that he is *inflamed by passion*. The expression here is sublime in the highest degree. God seemed to be angry, and hence he came forth in this awful manner, and the very earth trembled before him.

8. *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils.* Marg., *by his;* that is, as it is understood in the margin, the smoke seemed to be produced *by* his nostrils, or to be caused by his breathing. The comparison, according to Rosenmüller and De Wette, is derived from wild beasts when excited with anger, and when their rage is indicated by their violent breathing. Comp. Ps. lxxiv. 1; Deut. xxix. 20; Isa. lxv. 5. ¶ *And fire out of his mouth devoured.* That is, the clouds seemed to be poured forth from his nostrils, and the lightning from his mouth. So in Habakkuk iii. 5: "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet." ¶ *Coals were kindled by it.* Everything seemed to glow and burn. The lightning, that appeared to flash from his mouth, set everything on fire. The heavens and the earth were in a blaze.

9. *He bowed the heavens also.* He seemed to bend down the heavens,—to bring them nearer to the earth. "He inclines the canopy of the heavens, as it were, towards the earth; wraps himself in the darkness of night, and shoots forth his arrows; hurls abroad his lightnings, and wings them with speed." Herder, Spirit of Hebrew Poetry (Marsh), ii. 157. The allusion is still to the tempest, when the clouds run low; when they

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion [n] round about

[n] Psa. xxvii. 5.

seem to sweep along the ground; when it appears as if the heavens were brought nearer to the earth—as if, to use a common expression, "the heavens and earth were coming together." ¶ *And came down.* God himself seemed to descend in the fury of the storm. ¶ *And darkness* was *under his feet.* A dark cloud; or, the darkness caused by thick clouds. Comp. Nahum i. 3, "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." Deut. iv. 11, "the mountain burned . . . with thick darkness." v. 22, "These words the Lord spake out of the thick darkness." Ps. xcvii. 2, "Clouds and darkness are round about him." The idea here is that of awful majesty and power, as we are nowhere more forcibly impressed with the idea of majesty and power than in the fury of a storm.

10. *And he rode upon a cherub.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 13; xxxvii. 16. The cherub in the theology of the Hebrews was a figurative representation of power and majesty, under the image of a being of a high and celestial nature, "whose form is represented as composed from the figures of a man, ox, lion, and eagle," Ezek. i., x. Cherubs are first mentioned as guarding the gates of Paradise, Gen. iii. 24; then as bearing the throne of God upon their wings through the clouds, Ezek. i., x.; and also as statues or images made of wood and overlaid with gold, over the cover of the ark, in the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle, and of the temple, Ex. xxv. 18, *seq.*; 1 Kings vi. 23–28. Between the two cherubim in the temple, the Shechinah, or visible symbol of the presence of God, rested; and hence God is represented as "dwelling between the cherubim," Ex. xxv. 22; Num. vii. 89; Ps. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1. The cherubim are not to be regarded as real existences, or as an order of angels like the seraphim (Isa. vi. 2, 3), but as an imaginary representation of majesty, as emblematic of the power and glory of God. Here God is represented as "riding on a cherub;" that is, as coming forth on the clouds regarded as a cherub (comp. Ezek. i.), as if, seated on his throne, he was borne along in majesty and power amidst the storm and tempest. ¶ *And did fly.* He seemed to move rapidly on the flying clouds. ¶ *Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.* Rapidly as the clouds driven along by the wind. The "*wings* of the wind" are designed to represent the *rapidity* with which the wind sweeps along. Rapid motion is represented by the flight of birds; hence the term wings is applied to winds to denote the rapidity of their movement. The whole figure here is designed to represent the majesty with which God seemed to be borne along on the tempest. Herder renders it, "He flew on the wings of the storm."

11. *He made darkness his secret place.* Herder has beautifully rendered this verse,

> "Now he wrapped himself in darkness;
> Clouds on clouds enclosed him round."

The word rendered *secret place*—סֵתֶר, *saither*—means properly *a hiding;* then something hidden, private, secret. Hence it means a covering, a veil. Comp. Job xxii. 14; xxiv. 15. In Ps. lxxxi. 7 it is applied to thunder: "I answered thee in the *secret place* of thunder;" that is, in the secret place or retreat,—the deep, dark cloud, whence the thunder seems to come. Here the meaning seems to be, that God was encompassed with darkness. He had, as it were, wrapped himself in night, and made his abode in the gloom of the storm. ¶ *His pavilion.* His *tent*, for so the word means. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20. His abode was in the midst of clouds and waters, or watery clouds.

him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds [o] of the skies.

12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail-*stones* and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered [p] in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-*stones* and coals of fire.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot

[o] Psa. xcvii. 2.

[p] 1 Sam. vii. 10.

¶ *Round about him.* Perhaps a more literal translation would be, "the things round about him—his tent (shelter, or cover)—were the darkness of waters, the clouds of the skies." The idea is, that he seemed to be encompassed with watery clouds. ¶ *Dark waters.* Heb., *darkness of waters.* The allusion is to clouds filled with water; charged with rain. ¶ *Thick clouds of the skies.* The word rendered *skies* in this place—שְׁחָקִים, *shehhâkim*—means, in the singular, *dust,* as being fine; then a cloud, as a cloud of dust; then, in the plural, it is used to denote *clouds,* Job xxxviii. 37; and hence it is used to denote the region of the clouds; the firmament; the sky; Job xxxvii. 18. Perhaps a not inaccurate rendering here would be, "clouds of clouds;" that is, clouds rolled in with clouds; clouds of one kind rapidly succeeding those of another kind—inrolling and piled on each other. There are four different kinds of clouds; and though we cannot suppose that the distinction was accurately marked in the time of the psalmist, yet to the slightest observation there *is* a distinction in the clouds, and it is possible that by the use of two terms here, both denoting clouds—one thick and dense, and the other clouds as resembling dust—the psalmist meant to intimate that clouds *of all kinds* rolled over the firmament, and that these constituted the "pavilion" of God.

12. *At the brightness* that was *before him.* From the flash—the play of the lightnings that seemed to go before him. ¶ *His thick clouds passed.* Or, vanished. They seemed to pass away. The light, the flash, the blaze, penetrated those clouds, and seemed to dispel, or to scatter them. The whole heavens were in a blaze, as if there were no clouds, or as if the clouds were all driven away. The reference here is to the appearance when the vivid flashes of lightning seem to penetrate and dispel the clouds, and the heavens seem to be lighted up with a universal flame. ¶ *Hail*-stones. That is, hail-stones followed, or fell. ¶ *And coals of fire.* There *seemed* to be coals of fire rolling along the ground, or falling from the sky. In the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii. 13 the expression is, "Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled." That is, fires were kindled by the lightning. The expression in the psalm is more terse and compact, but the reason of the change cannot be assigned.

13. *The* LORD *also thundered in the heavens.* Thunder is often in the Scriptures described as the voice of God. See the magnificent description in Ps. xxix.; comp. Job xl. 9, "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" So 1 Sam. vii. 10; xii. 18; Ps. lxxvii. 18; Job xxxvii. 4. ¶ *And the Highest gave his voice.* God, the most exalted Being in the universe, uttered his voice in the thunder; or, the thunder was his voice. ¶ *Hail*-stones, *and coals of fire.* Accompanying the thunder. The *repetition* seems to be because these were such striking and constant accompaniments of the storm.

14. *Yea, he sent out his arrows.* The word *arrows* here probably refers to the lightnings mentioned in the other clause of the verse. Those lightnings scattered around, and accomplishing such destruction, seemed to be arrows sent forth from the hand of God. ¶ *And scattered them.* Herder refers this to the lightnings; De Wette, to the enemies of the

out lightnings, and discomfited them.

15 Then [q] the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

[q] Psa. cvi. 9.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of [1] many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

[1] Or, *great.*

psalmist. The latter seems to be the more correct interpretation, though the enemies of the psalmist are not here particularly specified. They seem, however, to have been in his eye throughout the psalm, for it was the victory achieved over them by the Divine interposition that he was celebrating throughout the poem. ¶ *And he shot out lightnings.* As arrows; or, as from a bow. ¶ *And discomfited them.* Literally to impel, to drive; then, to put in commotion or consternation. The allusion is to an army whose order is *disturbed,* or which is thrown into confusion, and which is, therefore, easily conquered. The idea is that David achieved a victory over all his enemies, *as if* God had scattered them by a storm and tempest.

15. *Then the channels of waters were seen.* In 2 Sam. xxii. 16 this is, "And the channels of the sea appeared." The idea is that, by the driving of the storm and tempest, the waters were driven on heaps, leaving the bottom bare. In the place before us the word used, "waters"— מַיִם, *mayim*—would denote waters of any kind—seas, lakes, rivers; in the corresponding place in 2 Samuel, the word used—יָם, *Yâm*—denotes, properly, the sea or the ocean. The word rendered *channels* means a pipe or tube; then a channel, or bed of a brook or stream, Isa. viii. 7; Ezek. xxxii. 6; and then the bottom of the sea or of a river. The allusion is to the effect of a violent wind, driving the waters on heaps, and seeming to leave the bed or channel bare. ¶ *The foundations of the world were discovered.* Were laid open; were manifested or revealed. Men seemed to be able to look down into the depths, and to see the very foundations on which the earth rests. The world is often represented as resting on a foundation, Ps. cii. 25; Isa. xlviii. 13; Zech. xii. 1; Prov. viii. 29; see Notes on Job xxxviii. 4. ¶ *At thy rebuke.* At the expression of his anger or displeasure; as if God, in the fury of the tempest, was expressing his indignation and wrath. ¶ *At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.* At the breathing forth of anger, as it were, from his nostrils. See Notes on ver. 8.

16. *He sent from above.* He interposed to save me. All these manifestations of the Divine interposition were from above, or from heaven; all came from God. ¶ *He took me.* He took hold on me; he rescued me. ¶ *He drew me out of many waters.* Marg., *great waters.* Waters are often expressive of calamity and trouble, Ps. xlvi. 3; lxix. 1; lxxiii. 10; cxxiv. 4, 5. The meaning here is, that God had rescued him out of the many troubles and dangers that encompassed him, as if he had fallen into the sea and was in danger of perishing.

17. *He delivered me from my strong enemy.* The enemy that had more power than I had, and that was likely to overcome me. It is probable that the allusion here in the mind of the psalmist would be particularly to Saul. ¶ *And from them which hated me.* From all who hated and persecuted me, in the time of Saul, and ever onward during my life. ¶ *For they were too strong for me.* I had no power to resist them, and when I was about to sink under their opposition and malice, God interposed and rescued me. David, valiant and bold

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but [r] the LORD was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

20 The LORD rewarded [s] me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

r 1 Sam. xxx. 6; Psa. iii. 1—5.

s 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 20.

as he was as a warrior, was not ashamed, in the review of his life, to admit that he owed his preservation not to his own courage and skill in war, but to God; that his enemies were superior to himself in power; and that if God had not interposed he would have been crushed and destroyed. No man dishonours himself by acknowledging that he owes his success in the world to the Divine interposition.

18. *They prevented me.* They anticipated me, or went before me. See Notes on ver. 5. The idea here is that his enemies came before him, or intercepted his way. They were in his path, ready to destroy him. ¶ *In the day of my calamity.* In the day to which I now look back as the time of my peculiar trial. ¶ *But the* LORD *was my stay.* My support, or prop. That is, the Lord upheld me, and kept me from falling.

19. *He brought me forth also into a large place.* Instead of being hemmed in by enemies, and straitened in my troubles, so that I seemed to have no room to move, he brought me into a place where I had ample room, and where I could act freely. Comp. Notes on Ps. iv. 1. ¶ *He delivered me.* He rescued me from my enemies and my troubles. ¶ *Because he delighted in me.* He saw that my cause was just, and he had favour towards me.

20. *The* LORD *rewarded me according to my righteousness.* That is, he saw that I did not deserve the treatment which I received from my enemies, and therefore he interposed to save me. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 3. ¶ *According to the cleanness of my hands.* So far as my fellow-men are concerned. I have done *them* no wrong. ¶ *Hath he recompensed me.* By rescuing me from the power of my enemies. It is not inconsistent with proper views of piety—with true humility before God—to feel and to say, that so far as our fellow-men are concerned, we have not deserved ill-treatment at their hands; and, when we are delivered from their power, it is not improper to say and to feel that the interposition in the case has been according to justice and to truth.

21. *For I have kept the ways of the* LORD. I have obeyed his laws. I have not so violated the laws which God has given to regulate my conduct with my fellow-men as to deserve to be treated by them as a guilty man. ¶ *And have not wickedly departed from my God.* "I have not been a sinner from my God;"—an apostate; an open violator of his law. The treatment which I have received, though it would be justly rendered to an open violator of law, is not that which I have merited from the hand of man.

22. *For all his judgments.* All his statutes, ordinances, laws. The word *judgment* is commonly used in this sense in the Scriptures, as referring to that which God has *judged* or determined to be right. ¶ Were *before me.* That is, I acted in view of them, or as having them to guide me. They were constantly before my eyes, and I regulated my conduct in accordance with their requirements. ¶ *And I did not put away his statutes from me.* I did not reject them as the guide of my conduct.

23 I was also upright [1] before him, and I kept myself from mine [t] iniquity.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands [2] in his eyesight.

25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an

[1] *with.* [t] Psa. xxxvii. 27. [2] *before his eyes.*

23. *I was also upright before him.* Marg., *with.* The meaning is that he was upright in his sight. The word rendered *upright* is the same which in Job i. 1 is rendered *perfect.* See Notes on that passage. ¶ *And I kept myself from mine iniquity.* From the iniquity to which I was *prone* or *inclined.* This is an acknowledgment that he *was* prone to sin, or that if he had acted out his natural character he would have indulged in sin—perhaps such sins as had been charged upon him. But he here says that, with this natural proneness to sin, he had restrained himself, and had *not* been deserving of the treatment which he had received. This is one of those incidental remarks which often occur in the Scriptures which recognise the doctrine of depravity, or the fact that the heart, even when most restrained, is by nature inclined to sin. If this psalm was composed in the latter part of the life of David (see the introd.), then this must mean either (*a*) that in the review of his life he felt it had been his general and habitual aim to check his natural inclination to sin; or (*b*) that at the particular periods referred to in the psalm, when God had so wonderfully interposed in his behalf, he felt that this had been his aim, and that he might now regard that as a reason why God had interposed in his behalf. It is, however, painfully certain that at some periods of his life—as in the matter of Uriah—he *did* give indulgence to some of the most corrupt inclinations of the human heart, and that, in acting out these corrupt propensities, he was guilty of crimes which have for ever dimmed the lustre of his name and stained his memory. These painful facts, however, are not inconsistent with the statement that in his general character he *did* restrain these corrupt propensities, and *did* "keep himself from his iniquity." So, in the review of our own lives, if we are truly the friends of God, while we may be painfully conscious that we have often given indulgence to the corrupt propensities of our natures,—over which, if we are truly the children of God, we shall have repented,—we may still find evidence that, as the great and habitual rule of life, we *have* restrained those passions, and *have* "kept ourselves" from the particular forms of sin to which our hearts were prone.

22. *Therefore hath the* LORD *recompensed me.* By delivering me from my enemies. The Divine interpositions in his behalf had been of the nature of a *reward* or *recompense.* ¶ *According to my righteousness.* As if I were righteous; or, his acts of intervention have been such as are appropriate to a righteous life. The psalmist does not say that it was *on account* of his righteousness as if he had *merited* the favour of God, but that the interpositions in his behalf had been such as to show that God regarded him as righteous. ¶ *According to the cleanness of my hands.* See Notes on ver. 20. ¶ *In his eyesight.* Marg., as in Heb., *before his eyes.* The idea is that God *saw* that he was upright.

25. *With the merciful.* From the particular statement respecting the Divine dealings with himself the psalmist now passes to a general statement (suggested by what God had done for him) in regard to the general principles of the Divine administration. That general statement is, that *God deals with men according to their character;* or, that he will adapt his providential dealings to the conduct of men. They will find him to be such towards them as they have

upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

26 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward [u] thou wilt [1] show thyself froward.

27 For thou wilt save the

[u] Prov. iii. 34. [1] Or, *wrestle.*

shown themselves to be towards him. The word *merciful* refers to one who is disposed to show kindness or compassion to those who are guilty, or to those who injure or wrong us. ¶ *Thou wilt show thyself merciful.* Thou wilt evince towards him the same character which he shows to others. It is in accordance with this that the Saviour teaches us to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," Matt. vi. 12. And in accordance also with this he said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 14, 15. ¶ *With an upright man.* Literally, a perfect man. See Job i. 1, where the same word is used in the original, and rendered *perfect.* The idea is that of a man who is *consistent,* or whose character is complete in all its parts. See Notes on Job i. 1. ¶ *Thou wilt show thyself upright.* Thou wilt deal with him according to his character. As he is faithful and just, so will he find that he has to do with a God who is faithful and just.

26. *With the pure.* Those who are pure in their thoughts, their motives, their conduct. ¶ *Thou wilt show thyself pure.* They will find that they have to deal with a God who is himself pure; who loves purity, and who will accompany it with appropriate rewards wherever it is found. ¶ *And with the froward.* The word here used—עִקֵּשׁ, *ikkaish*—means properly *perverse;* a man of a perverse and wicked mind. It is derived from a verb—עָקַשׁ, *akash*—which means, *to turn the wrong way, to wrest, to pervert.* It would be applicable to a man who perverts or wrests the words of others from their true meaning; who prevaricates or is deceitful in his own conduct; who is not straightforward in his dealings; who takes advantage of circumstances to impose on others, and to promote his own ends; who is sour, harsh, crabbed, unaccommodating, unyielding, unkind. It is rendered *perverse* in Deut. xxxii. 5; Prov. viii. 8; xix. 1; xxviii. 6; *froward* here, and in 2 Sam. xxii. 27; Ps. ci. 4; Prov. xi. 20; xvii. 20; xxii. 5; and *crooked* in Prov. ii. 15. The word does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. ¶ *Thou wilt show thyself froward.* Marg., *wrestle.* In the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii. 27 it is rendered, "Thou wilt show thyself unsavory;" though the same word is used in the original. In the margin in that place, as here, the word is *wrestle.* The original word in each place—פָּתַל, *pathal*—means *to twist, to twine, to spin;* and then, to be twisted; to be crooked, crafty, deceitful. In the form of the word which occurs here (Hithpa), it means, *to show oneself crooked, crafty, perverse.* (Gesenius, *Lex.*) It cannot mean here that God would assume such a character, or that he would *be* crooked, crafty, perverse in his dealings with men; for no one can suppose that the psalmist meant to ascribe such a character to God; but the meaning plainly is, that God would deal with the man referred to according to his real character: instead of finding that God would deal with them *as if* they were pure, and righteous, and merciful, such men would find that he deals with them *as they are,*—as perverse, crooked, wicked.

27. *For thou wilt save the afflicted people.* From the particular tokens of Divine favour towards himself in affliction and trouble, the psalmist now draws the general inference that this was the character of God, and that others in affliction might hope for his interposition as he had done.

afflicted people; but wilt bring down high [v] looks.

28 For thou wilt light my [1] candle; [w] the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

29 For by thee I have [2] run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

30 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is

v Prov. vi. 16, 17. [1] Or, *lamp*, Job xxix. 3.

w Prov. xx. 27. [2] *broken.*

¶ *But wilt bring down high looks.* Another general inference probably derived from the dealings of God with the proud and haughty foes of the psalmist. As God had humbled them, so he infers that he would deal with others in the same way. "High looks" are indicative of pride and haughtiness. Comp. Ps. ci. 5; Prov. vi. 17; xxi. 4; Isa. ii. 11 (Notes); x. 12; Dan. vii. 20.

28. *For thou wilt light my candle.* Marg., *lamp.* The word *lamp* best expresses the idea. In the Scriptures *light* is an image of prosperity, success, happiness, holiness, as darkness is the image of the opposite. See Notes on Job xxix. 2, 3; comp. also Job xviii. 6; xxi. 17; Prov. xx. 27; xxiv. 20; Ps. cxix. 105; cxxxii. 17; Isa. lxii. 1. The meaning here is, that the psalmist felt assured that God would give him prosperity, *as if* his lamp were kept constantly burning in his dwelling. ¶ *The* LORD *my God will enlighten my darkness.* Will shed light on my path, which would otherwise be dark:—will impart light to my understanding; will put peace and joy in my heart; will crown me with his favour. Comp. Notes on Ps. iv. 6.

29. *For by thee I have run through a troop.* Marg., *broken.* The word *troop* here refers to bands of soldiers, or hosts of enemies. The word rendered *run through* means properly to *run;* and then, as here, to run or rush upon in a hostile sense; to rush with violence upon one. The idea here is that he had been enabled to rush with violence upon his armed opposers; that is, to overcome them, and to secure a victory. The allusion is to the wars in which he had been engaged. Comp. cxv. 1. ¶ *And by my God.* By the help derived from God. ¶ *Have I leaped over a wall.* Have I been delivered, as if I had leaped over a wall when I was besieged; or, I have been able to scale the walls of an enemy, and to secure a victory. The probability is that the latter is the true idea, and that he refers to his successful attacks on the fortified towns of his enemies. The general idea is, that all his victories were to be traced to God.

30. As for *God.* The declaration in this verse is suggested by the facts narrated in the previous verses. The contemplation of those facts leads the thoughts of the author of the psalm up to the Great Source of all these blessings, and to these general reflections on his character. "As for God," that is, in respect to that Great Being, who has delivered *me,* his ways are all perfect; his word is tried; he is a shield to all those who trust in him. ¶ *His way is perfect.* That is, his doings are perfect; his methods of administration are perfect; his government is perfect. There is nothing wanting, nothing defective, nothing redundant, in what he does. On the word *perfect,* see Notes on Job i. 1. ¶ *The word of the* LORD *is tried.* Marg., *refined.* The idea is, that his word had been tested as silver or any other metal is in the fire. The psalmist had confided in him, and had found him faithful to all his promises. Compare Notes on Ps. xii. 6. In a larger sense, using the phrase the "word of the Lord" as denoting the revelation which God has made to mankind in the volume of revealed truth, it has been abundantly tested or tried, and it still stands. It has been tested by the friends of God, and has been found to be all that it promised to be for support and consolation in trial; it has been tested by the changes which have occurred in

] tried; [w] he *is* a buckler [v] to all those that trust in him.

31 For who *is* God save the LORD? or who *is* a rock save our God.

32 *It is* God [z] that girdeth me

[1] *refined.* [x] Psa. xii. 6.

with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

33 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*, and setteth me upon my high places.

[y] Prov. xxx. 5. [z] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

the progress of human affairs, and has been found fitted to meet all those changes; it has been tested by the advances which have been made in science, in literature, in civilization, and in the arts, and it has shown itself to be fitted to every stage of advance in society; it has been tested by the efforts which men have made to destroy it, and has survived all those efforts. It is settled that it will survive all the revolutions of kingdoms and all the changes of dynasties; that it will be able to meet all the attacks which shall be made upon it by its enemies; and that it will be an unfailing source of light and comfort to all future ages. If persecution could crush it, it would have been crushed long ago; if ridicule could drive it from the world, it would have been driven away long ago; if argument, as urged by powerful intellect, and by learning, combined with intense hatred, could destroy it, it would have been destroyed long ago; and if it is not fitted to impart consolation to the afflicted, to wipe away the tears of mourners, and to uphold the soul in death, that would have been demonstrated long ago. In all these methods it has been "tried," and as the result of all, it has been proved as the only certain fact, in regard to a *book* as connected with the future—that the Bible will go down accredited as a revelation from God to the end of the world. ¶ *He is a buckler.* Or, a *shield*, for so the original word means. See Notes on Ps. iii. 3.

31. *For who* is *God save the* LORD? Who is God except Jehovah? The idea is, that no other being has evinced the power, the wisdom, and the goodness which properly belong to the true God; or, that the things which are implied in the true nature of *God* are found in no other being. ¶ *Or who* is *a rock save our God?* See ver. 2. There is no one who can furnish such safety or defence; no one under whose protection we can be secure in danger. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 31.

32. It is *God that girdeth me with strength.* Who gives me strength. The word *girdeth* contains an allusion to the mode of dress among the orientals, the long flowing robe, which was *girded up* when they ran or laboured, that it might not impede them; and, probably, with the additional idea that girding the loins contributed to strength. It is a common custom now for men who run a race, or leap, or engage in a strife of pugilism, to gird or bind up their loins. See Notes on Job xl. 7; and on Matt. v. 38—41. ¶ *And maketh my way perfect.* Gives me complete success in my undertakings; or, enables me so to carry them out that none of them fail.

33. *He maketh my feet like hinds'* feet. So Habakkuk iii. 19, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." The *hind* is the female deer, remarkable for fleetness or swiftness. The meaning here is, that God had made him alert or active, enabling him to pursue a flying enemy, or to escape from a swift-running foe. ¶ *And setteth me upon my high places.* Places of safety or refuge. The idea is, that God had given him security, or had rendered him safe from danger. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 13. Swiftness of foot, or ability to escape from, or to pursue an enemy, was regarded as of great value in ancient warfare. Achilles, according to the descriptions of

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy [1] gentleness hath made me great.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my [2] feet did not [a] slip.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

[1] Or, *with thy meekness thou hast multiplied me.* [2] *ancles.* [a] Prov. iv. 12.

Homer, was remarkable for it. Comp. 2 Sam. ii. 18; 1 Chron. xii. 8.

34. *He teacheth my hands to war.* Comp. Ps. cxliv. 1. The skill which David had in the use of the bow, the sword, or the spear,—all of which depends on the hands,—he ascribes entirely to God. ¶ *So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.* This is mentioned as an instance of extraordinary strength, as if he were able to *break* a bow made of metal. The original word rendered *steel* means properly *brass*. Wood was doubtless first used in constructing the bow, but metals came afterwards to be employed, and brass would naturally be used before the manufacture of steel was discovered. Rosenmüller *in loc.*

35. *Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation.* Thou hast saved me as with a shield; thou hast thrown thy shield before me in times of danger. See Notes on Ps. v. 12. ¶ *And thy right hand hath holden me up.* Thou hast sustained me when in danger of falling, as if thou hadst upheld me with thine own hand. ¶ *And thy gentleness hath made me great.* Marg., "or, *with thy meekness thou hast multiplied me.*" The word here rendered *gentleness*, evidently means here *favour, goodness, kindness.* It commonly means *humility, modesty*, as applied to men; as applied to God, it means *mildness, clemency, favour.* The idea is, that God had dealt with him in gentleness, kindness, clemency, and that to this fact alone he owed all his prosperity and success in life. It was not by any claim which he had on God; it was by no worth of his own; it was by no native strength or valour that he had been thus exalted, but it was wholly because God had dealt *kindly* with him, or had showed him *favour.* So all our success in life is to be traced to the *favour*—the *kindness*—of God.

36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me.* The idea here is, "Thou hast made room for my feet, so that I have been enabled to walk without hindrance or obstruction. So in Psalm xxxi. 8, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room." The idea is, that he was before straitened, compressed, hindered in his goings, but that now all obstacles had been taken out of the way, and he could walk freely. ¶ *That my feet did not slip.* Marg., *mine ancles.* The Hebrew word here rendered in the text *feet*, and in the margin *ancles*, means properly *a joint; small joint;* especially the *ancle.* The reference here is to the *ancle*, the joint that is so useful in walking, and that is so liable to be sprained or dislocated. The meaning is that he had been enabled to walk firmly; that he did not *limp.* Before, he had been like one whose ancles are weak or sprained; now he was able to tread firmly. The Divine favour given to him was *as if* God had given strength to a lame man to walk firmly.

37. *I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them.* He had not only routed them, but had had strength to pursue them; he had not only pursued them, but he had been enabled to come up to them. The idea is that of complete success and absolute triumph. ¶ *Neither did I turn again.* I was not driven back, nor was I weary and exhausted, and compelled to give over the pursuit. ¶ *Till they were consumed.* Till they were all either slain or made captive, so that

38 I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: [b] they are fallen under my feet.

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast [1] subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them*: *even* unto the

b 2 Sam. v. 20. [1] *caused to bow.*

the hostile forces vanished. None of my enemies were left.

38. *I have wounded them*, etc. I have so weakened them—so entirely prostrated them—that they were not able to rally again. This does not refer so much to wounds inflicted on *individuals* in the hostile ranks as to the *entire* host or army. It was so weakened that it could not again be put in battle array. The idea is that of successful pursuit and conquest. ¶ *They are fallen under my feet.* I have completely trodden them down —a common mode of denoting entire victory, Ps. cxix. 118; Isa. xxv. 10; Lam. i. 15; Dan. viii. 13; Luke xxi. 24.

39. *For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle.* See Notes on ver. 32. Comp. Job xii. 18; Prov. xxxi. 17. ¶ *Thou hast subdued under me.* Marg., as in Heb., *caused to bow.* That is, God had caused them to submit to him; he had enabled him to overcome them;—still acknowledging that all this was from God, and that the praise was due to Him, and not to the power of his own arm.

40. *Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies.* Their necks to tread upon, as the result of victory; or their necks to be subject to me, as the neck of the ox is to his owner. The phrase is sometimes used in this latter sense to denote subjection (comp. Jer. xxvii. 12); but it is more commonly, when applied to war, used in the former sense, as denoting complete triumph or conquest. It was not uncommon to trample on the necks of those who were overcome in battle. See Josh. x. 24; Ezek. xxi. 2; Gen. xlix. 8. The word used here—עֹרֶף, *oreph*—means properly *neck*, *nape*, the back of the neck; and hence, *to give the neck* means sometimes to turn the back, as in flight; and the phrase would admit of that meaning here. So Gesenius (*Lex.*) understands it. So also De Wette: "Thou turnest my enemies to flight." It seems to me, however, that the more probable interpretation is that of complete subjection,—as when the conqueror places his foot on the necks of his foes. This is confirmed by the next member of the sentence, where the psalmist speaks of the complete *destruction* of those who hated him. ¶ *That I might destroy them that hate me.* That have pursued and persecuted me in this manner. The idea is that of utterly overcoming them; of putting an end to their power, and to their ability to injure him.

41. *They cried.* They cried out for help, for mercy, for life. In modern language, "they begged for quarter." They acknowledged that they were vanquished, and entreated that their lives might be spared. ¶ *But* there was *none to save* them. To preserve their lives. No help appeared from their own countrymen; they found no mercy in me or my followers; and God did not interpose to deliver them. ¶ Even *unto the* LORD. As a last resort. Men appeal to everything else for help before they will appeal to God; often when they come to him it is by constraint, and not willingly; if the danger should leave them, they would cease to call upon him. Hence, as there is no real sincerity in their calling upon God—no real regard for his honour or his commands—their cries are not heard, and they perish. The course of things with a sinner, however, is often such that, despairing of salva-

LORD, but [c] he answered them not.

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; *and* thou hast made me the head

[c] Jer. xi. 11.

tion in any other way, and seeing that this is the only true way, he comes with a heart broken, contrite, penitent, and then God never turns away from the cry. No sinner, though *as* a last resort, who comes to God in *real* sincerity, will ever be rejected. ¶ *But he answered them not.* He did not put forth his power to save them from my sword; to keep them alive when they were thus vanquished. Had they cried unto him *to save their souls,* he would undoubtedly have done it; but their cry was for life—for the Divine help to save them from the sword of the conqueror. There might have been many reasons why God should not interpose to save them from the regular consequences of valour when they had been in the wrong and had begun the war; but there would have been no reason why he should not interpose if they had called upon him to save them from their sins. There may be many reasons why God should not save sinners from the *temporal* judgments due to their sins—the intemperate from the diseases, the poverty, and the wretchedness consequent on that vice,—or the licentious from the woes and sorrows caused by such a course of life; but there is no reason, in any case, why God should not save from the eternal consequences of sin, if the sinner cries sincerely and earnestly for mercy.

42. *Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind.* As the fine dust is driven by the wind, so they fled before me. There could be no more striking illustration of a discomfited army flying before a conqueror. De Wette says correctly that the idea is, "I beat them small, and scattered them as dust before the wind." ¶ *I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.* In the corresponding place in 2 Sam. xxii. 43, this is, "I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad." The idea in the place before us is, that he *poured them out,* for so the Hebrew word means, as the dirt or mire in the streets. As that is trodden on, or trampled down, so they, instead of being marshalled for battle, were wholly disorganized, scattered, and left to be trodden down, as the most worthless object is. A similar image occurs in Isa. x. 6, where God is speaking of Sennacherib: "I will send him against an hypocritical nation.....to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

43. *Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people.* From the *contentions* of the people; or, from the efforts which they have made to overcome and subdue me. The allusion is to the efforts made by the people, under the guidance of their leaders. It is not "strivings" *among* his own followers, but the efforts, the strivings, the contentions of his enemies, who endeavoured to obtain the mastery over him, and to subdue him. ¶ *Thou hast made me the head of the heathen.* The head of the *nations;* that is, the nations round about. In other words, he had, by the Divine aid, brought them into subjection to him, or so subdued them that they became tributary to him. The word "*heathen*" with us expresses an idea which is not necessarily connected with the original word. That word is simply *nations*—גּוֹיִם, *goim.* It is true that those nations *were* heathens in the present sense of the term, but that idea is not necessarily connected with the *word.* The meaning is, that surrounding *nations* had been made subject to him; or that he had been made to rule over them. David, in fact, thus brought the surrounding

of the heathen: a [d] people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

44 [1] As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the [2] strangers shall [3] submit themselves unto me.

[d] Isa. lv. 5.
[1] *At the hearing of the ear.*
[2] *sons of the stranger.*
[3] *lie*, or, *yield feigned obedience.*

people under subjection to him, and made them tributary. In 2 Sam. viii. he is said to have subdued Philistia, and Moab, and Syria, and Edom, in all of which countries he put "garrisons," and all of which he made tributary to himself. ¶ *A people* whom *I have not known shall serve me.* People that I had not before heard of. This is the language of confident faith that his kingdom would be still further extended, so as to embrace nations before unknown to him. His past victories, and the fact that his kingdom had been so established and was already so extended, justified the expectation that it would be still further enlarged; that the fame of his conquests would reach other nations, and that they would willingly yield themselves to him. After the victories which he had achieved, as celebrated in this psalm, that might be expected to follow as a matter of course. It is the triumphant exultation of a conqueror, and it seems to have been his expectation, not that his successors would extend the empire, but that other nations would become voluntarily subject to him.

44. *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.* Marg., as in Heb., *At the hearing of the ear.* That is, their submission will be prompt and immediate. The fame of my victories will be such as to render resistance hopeless; my fame, as at the head of a mighty empire, will be such as to lead them to desire my friendship and protection. ¶ *The strangers.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *The sons of the stranger.* The word refers to *foreigners*, to those of other nations. His name and deeds would inspire such respect, or create such a dread of his power, that they would be glad to seek his friendship, and would readily submit to his dominion. ¶ *Shall submit themselves unto me.* Marg., *yield feigned obedience.* The Hebrew word here used—כָּחַשׁ, *chahhash*—means properly *to lie, to speak lies;* then, to deceive, or disappoint; then, to feign, to flatter, to play the hypocrite. It is manifestly used in this sense here, as referring to those who, awed by the terror of his name and power, would come and profess subjection to him as a conqueror. Yet the use of the word here implies that he was aware that, in many cases, this would be only a *feigned* submission, or that the homage would be hypocritical; homage inspired by terror, not by love. Undoubtedly much of the professed subjection of conquered nations is of this kind, and it would be well if all conquerors understood this as David did. He accepted, indeed, the acquiescence and the submission, but he understood the cause; and this knowledge would only tend to make his throne more secure, as it would save him from putting confidence or trust where there was no certainty that it would be well placed. Towards David as a sovereign there was much real loyalty, but there was also much professed allegiance that was false and hollow; allegiance which would endure only while his power lasted, and which would only wait for an opportunity to throw off the yoke. In respect to God, also, there are not a few who "*feignedly* submit" to him, or who yield feigned obedience. They, too, are awed by his power. They know that he is able to destroy. They see the tokens of his greatness and majesty, and they come and profess submission to him—a submission founded on terror, not on love; a submission which would cease at once could they be assured of safety if

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

46 The LORD liveth: and blessed *be* my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 *It is* God that [1] avengeth

[1] *giveth avengements for me.*

they should renounce their allegiance to him. And as David was not ignorant of the fact that not a little of the professed submission to him was false and feigned,—so, in a much higher sense—in a much more accurate manner—God is aware of the fact that many who profess to be subject to him are subject in profession only; that if they could do it with safety, they would throw off the very appearance of loyalty, and carry out in reality what exists in their hearts. It must have been sad for David to reflect how greatly the number of his professed subjects might have been diminished, if none had been retained but those who truly loved his reign, and respected him as a sovereign; it is sad to reflect how greatly the number of the professed friends of God would be diminished, if all those should withdraw who have yielded only feigned obedience to him! Yet the Church would be the better and the stronger for it.

45. *The strangers shall fade away.* Heb., "The sons of the stranger." That is, foreigners. The word rendered *fade away*—נָבֵל, *nabal*—means properly to wilt, wither, fall away, as applicable to flowers, leaves, or plants, Ps. i. 3; xxxvii. 2; Isa. i. 30; xxviii. 1. Here it means that those foreign nations would diminish in numbers and in power, until they should wholly disappear. The idea is, that all his foes would vanish, and that he and his kingdom would be left in peace. ¶ *And be afraid out of their close places.* The word rendered *be afraid* means *to tremble*—as those do who are in fear. The word rendered *close places* means places that are shut up or enclosed, as fortified cities or fortresses. The reference is to their places of retreat, towns, castles, fortresses. The meaning is, that they would find such places to be no security, and would *tremble out of them;* that is, they would flee out of them in consternation and alarm. The general thought is that of ultimate complete security for himself and his kingdom, or entire deliverance from all his enemies.

46. *The* LORD *liveth.* Jehovah—the name here used—is often described as the *living God* in contradistinction to idols, who are represented as without life, Deut. v. 26; Josh iii. 10; 2 Kings xix. 4; Ps. xlii. 2; Matt. xvi. 16; 1 Thess. i. 9. Comp. Ps. cxv. 5; cxxxv. 16. It is probably in allusion to this idea that the phrase "The Lord *liveth*" is used here. It is a joyful exclamation in view of all that God had done; of all the deliverances which he had wrought for the author of the psalm. In the remembrance of all this the psalmist says that God had shown himself to be the *living*, that is, the *true* God. These interpositions furnished abundant demonstration that Jehovah *existed*, and that he was worthy of adoration and praise *as* the true God. So, in view of mercy and salvation, the heart of the redeemed exultingly exclaims, "The Lord lives,—there *is* a living God." ¶ *And blessed* be *my Rock.* God, who has shown himself to be a refuge and a protector. See Notes on ver. 2. ¶ *And let the God of my salvation be exalted.* The God who has saved me from my enemies. Let him be *exalted*, be praised, be honoured, be adored. Let his name be exalted above all idol gods; above all the creatures that he has made. The wish is, that His name might be made *prominent;* that all creatures might praise and honour Him.

47. It is *God that avengeth me.* Marg., *giveth avengements for me.* The marginal reading is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The meaning is, that God had punished

me, and [1] subdueth the people under me.

48 He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the [2] violent man.

49 Therefore will I [3] give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

[1] *destroyeth.*

[2] *man of violence.*

[3] Or, *confess.*

the enemies of the author of the psalm for all the wrongs which they had done to him. Comp. Rom. xii. 19. ¶ *And subdueth the people under me.* Marg., *destroyeth.* The idea is that he had *subdued* the nations so that they became obedient to him. The primary notion of the word used here—from דָּבַר, *dabar*—is to set in a row; to range in order; to connect; to lead; to guide;—then, to reduce to order; to subdue. This God had done in respect to the nations. Instead of being rebellious and tumultuous, God had reduced them to obedience, and had thus set him over a kingdom where all were subject to order and to law.

48. *He delivereth me from mine enemies.* From all my foes. ¶ *Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me.* So that I triumph over them. Instead of being subdued by them, and trampled under their feet, I am exalted, and they are humbled. ¶ *Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.* Marg., as in Heb., *man of violence;* the man characterised by injustice and wrong; the man who endeavoured to overcome and subdue me by force and arms. There is probably a special allusion here by the psalmist to Saul as his great enemy, but perhaps he had also in his eye others of the same kind, and the meaning may be that he had been delivered from *all* of that class of men.

49. *Therefore will I give thanks unto thee.* Marg., *confess.* The Hebrew word—יָדָה, *yadah*—in the form used here, means properly *to profess, to confess, to acknowledge;* then especially to acknowledge or recognise blessings and favours; in other words, to give thanks, to praise. The idea here is that he would make a public *acknowledgment* of those blessings which he had received; or that he would cause the remembrance of them to be celebrated among the nations. ¶ *Among the heathen.* Among the *nations.* See Notes on ver. 43. The meaning here is, that he would cause these blessings to be remembered by making a record of them in this song of praise; a song that would be used not only in his own age and in his own country, but also among other nations, and in other times. He would do all in his power to make the knowledge of these favours, and these proofs of the existence of the true God, known abroad and transmitted to other times. The apostle Paul uses this language (Rom. xv. 9) as expressing properly the fact that the knowledge of God was to be communicated to the "*Gentiles:*" "As it is written, For this cause will I confess to thee among the *Gentiles.*" The word "heathen" or *nations,* in the passage before us, corresponds precisely with the meaning of the word *Gentiles;* and Paul has used the language of the psalm legitimately and properly as showing that it was a doctrine of the Old Testament that the truths of religion were not to be confined to the Jews, but were to be made known to other nations. ¶ *And sing praises unto thy name.* Unto thee;—the *name* often being used to denote the person. The meaning is, that he would cause the praises of God to be celebrated among foreign or heathen nations, as the result of what God had done for him. Far, probably, very far beyond what David anticipated when he penned this psalm, this has been done. The psalm itself has been chanted by mil-

50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for *f* evermore.

f Rom. xi. 29.

lions who were not in existence, and in lands of which the psalmist had no knowledge; and, connected as it has been with the other psalms in Christian worship, it has contributed in an eminent degree to extend the praises of God far in the earth, and to transmit the knowledge of him to generations as they succeeded one another. What David anticipated is, moreover, as yet only in the progress of fulfilment. Millions not yet born will make use of the psalm, as millions have done before, as the medium of praise to God; and down to the most distant times this sacred song, in connexion with the others in the Book of Psalms, will contribute to make God known in the earth, and to secure for him the praises of mankind.

50. *Great deliverance giveth he to his king.* To David, as king. The word in the original, which is rendered "deliverance," means properly *salvation*, and is here in the plural number. It refers not to *one* act of Divine interposition, but to the *many* acts (referred to in the psalm) in which God had interposed to save him from danger and from death. The phrase "to *his* king" refers to the fact that God had appointed him to reign, and to administer the government for *him*. He did not reign on his own account, but he reigned for God, and with a view to do his will. ¶ *And showeth mercy to his anointed.* To him who had been set apart to the kingly office by a solemn act of anointing. Comp. 1 Sam. xvi. 13; 2 Sam. ii. 4–7; v. 3, 17; xii. 7; comp. 2 Kings ix. 3, 6, 12. It is in allusion to this custom that the Messiah is called the *Anointed*, or the *Christ*. See Notes on Matt. i. 1. ¶ *To David, and to his seed.* To his descendants, or posterity. There is an undoubted reference here to the promises made to David in regard to his successors on the throne. See 2 Sam. vii. 12–16, 25, 26, and Ps. lxxxix. 19–37. ¶ *For evermore.* This expresses the confident expectation of David that the government would remain in his family to the latest times. This expectation was founded on such promises as that in 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom; he shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." Also 2 Sam. vii. 16: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever." See also Ps. lxxxix. 36: "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." The perpetuity of this kingdom is found, in fact, in the reign of the Messiah, a descendant of David, in whose eternal reign these promises will receive an ample fulfilment. See Isa. ix. 7. Comp. Luke i. 32, 33. The temporal reign passed wholly away in the process of time from the descendants of David; the spiritual reign is perpetual in the Messiah. How far *David* understood this it is not important to inquire, and it would be impossible to determine. It is sufficient for the proper understanding of the place to remember (*a*) that there will have been a strict fulfilment of the promise, according to the full import of the language, in the Messiah, the Son of David; and (*b*) that, however this may have been understood by David who recorded the promise, the real author of the promise was the Holy Spirit, and that the real meaning of the promise, as thus recorded, was that it should be fulfilled as it has been. In this, as in all other cases, the inquiry to be made in interpreting the language is not how the sacred penman understood it, but what was meant by the real author, the Spirit of God,—and whe-

ther the prediction, according to that meaning, has been fulfilled. When a man employs an amanuensis, the inquiry in regard to what is written is not how the amanuensis understood it, but how he who dictated what was written intended it should be understood. Applying this principle, the prediction here and elsewhere, in regard to the perpetuity of the reign of David and his posterity, has been, and is, fulfilled in the most ample manner. "Great David's greater Son" SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER.

PSALM XIX.

This very beautiful psalm is designed to illustrate the superiority of revealed truth above the light of nature in showing the character and perfections of God. In doing this, there is no attempt in the psalm, as there should be none on our part in explaining it, to *undervalue* or *disparage* the truths about God revealed by nature. All that could now be said in regard to the works of creation, as illustrating the Divine perfections, is really admitted by the psalmist (vers. 1-6); and yet this is placed in strong contrast with the revelations disclosed in the "law of the Lord," that is, in his revealed word (vers. 7-11). The revelations of nature, and the higher revelation by inspiration, belong to the same system of religion, and are alike designed to illustrate the being, the perfections, and the government of God. The friend of religion should claim the one as well as the other; the defence of the Bible as a revelation from God should not lead us to disparage or undervalue the disclosures respecting God as made by nature. He who asserts that a revelation is necessary to mankind, and who maintains that the light of nature is not sufficient for the wants of man, should nevertheless concede all that can be known from the works of God about the Creator; should rejoice in all that truth; and should be willing that all should be learned that can be learned about God from his works. When all this is admitted, and all this learned, there will be still an ample field for the higher disclosures which revelation claims to make.

Nor did the psalmist apprehend that the revelations about God which are made in his works would be in *conflict* with those which are made in his word. He evidently felt, in looking at these works of creation, that he was learning truths which would in no manner contradict the higher truths communicated by revelation; that the investigation of the one might be pursued to any extent without showing that the other was needless, or bringing the truth of the other into peril.

This psalm consists properly of three parts: I. The revelation of God in his works, vers. 1—6. II. The higher and more glorious revelation of himself in his law, vers. 7—10. III. The bearing of these truths on the present character and conduct of the author, and consequently their adaptedness to produce the same effect on others, vers. 11—14;—(*a*) in *warning* men of the nature of sin, and thus keeping them from transgression, ver. 11; (*b*) in making them aware of the extent and depth of sin, and especially of secret faults, ver. 12; (*c*) in leading them to pray earnestly that they may be cleansed from secret faults, and be kept back or restrained from presumptuous sins, vers. 12, 13; (*d*) in leading them to pray earnestly that their words and thoughts may be made acceptable to God, ver. 14.

The psalm is said in the title to be "A Psalm of David;" and there is nothing in the psalm itself to create a doubt in regard to the correctness of this statement. It is impossible, however, to determine when, or in what circumstances, it was composed; for there are no internal marks which will fix it at any particular period of the life of the author. There is no allusion either to persecution or to triumph;—to private, domestic, or public life,—or to any of the known circumstances of the history of David. If a conjecture may be allowed, it would seem not improbable that it was composed in those calm periods of his history when he led a shepherd-life; when he had abundant time to contemplate the movements of the heavenly bodies by day and by night, and to meditate on them in contrast with the higher truths which God had made known in his law.

Rosenmüller conjectured at one time that the psalm was originally *two*, and that the two were afterwards united into one. De Wette also looked favourably on this supposition. Rosenmüller, however, subsequently saw occasion to retract

PSALM XIX.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

THE heavens [g] declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handywork.

[g] Rom. i. 19, 20.

2 Day unto day uttereth

this, and to adopt the opinion that it was originally one composition. This is undoubtedly the correct idea, as appears not only from the fact that there is no evidence that these were *two* psalms, and from the general character and construction of the psalm, but from the fact that the conclusion (vers. 12—14) seems to be based on the contemplation of *all* the truth which God in any way makes known to the soul. On the supposition that the psalm is *one*, this is a proper termination of the whole composition. On the other supposition, no small part of the beauty of the psalm would be lost.

In respect to the meaning of the title, "To the chief Musician," see the introduction to Ps. iv.

1. *The heavens declare the glory of God.* They announce, proclaim, make known his glory. The word *heavens* here refers to the material heavens as they appear to the eye—the region of the sun, moon, and stars. The Hebrew word is used in the Scriptures uniformly in the plural number, though in our common translation the singular number is often used. Gen. i. 1, 8, 9, 14, 17, 20; vi. 17; vii. 11, 19, 23; *et sæpe.* The plural, however, is often retained, but without any special reason why it should be retained in one place rather than in another. Gen. ii. 1, 4; Deut. x. 14; Ezra ix. 6; Ps. ii. 4; viii. 1, 3; xviii. 13. The original idea may have been that there was one heaven above another—one in which the sun was placed, another in which the moon was placed, then the planets, the fixed stars, etc. Above all was supposed to be the place where God dwells. The word *glory* here means that which *constitutes* the glory or honour of God—his wisdom, power, skill, faithfulness, benevolence, as seen in the starry worlds above us, the silent, but solemn movements by day and by night. The idea is, that these convey to the mind a true impression of the greatness and majesty of God. The reference here is to these heavens as they appear to the naked eye, and as they are observed by all men. It may be added that the impression is far more solemn and grand when we take into the estimate the disclosures of the modern astronomy, and when we look at the heavens, not merely by the naked eye, but through the revelations of the telescope. ¶ *And the firmament.* See Notes on Daniel xii. 3. The word rendered *firmament*—רָקִיעַ, *rákia*, means properly an *expanse*,—that which is *spread out*—and is applied to the heavens as they appear to be spread out or expanded above us. The word occurs elsewhere in the following places, and is always rendered *firmament* in our common version, Gen. i. 6, 7 (twice), 8, 14, 15, 17, 20; Ps. cl. 1; Ezek. i. 22, 23, 25, 26; x. 1; Dan. xii. 3. The word *firmament*—that which is *firm* or fixed—is taken from the word used by the translators of the Septuagint, στερέωμα, from the idea that the heavens above us are a *solid concave.* In the Scriptures the stars are represented as placed in that expanse, so that if it should be rolled together as a tent is rolled up, they would fall down to the earth. See Notes on Isa. xxxiv. 4. The reference in the passage before us is to the heavens as they appear to be spread out over our heads, and in which the stars are fixed. ¶ *Showeth his handywork.* The heavens make known the work of his hands. The idea is that God had made those heavens by his own hands, and that the firmament, thus adorned with sun, and moon, and stars, showed the wisdom and skill with which it was done. Comp. Ps. viii. 3.

2. *Day unto day.* One day to another; or, each successive day. The day that is passing away proclaims the lesson which it had to

speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

3 *There is* no speech nor language, [1] *where* their voice is not heard.

[1] *without their voice heard*, or, *without* these *their voice is heard.*

convey from the movements of the heavens, about God; and thus the knowledge of God is accumulating as the time moves on. Each day has its own lesson in regard to the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, and that lesson is conveyed from one day to another. There is a perpetual testimony thus given to the wisdom and power of the Great Creator. ¶ *Uttereth speech.* The word here rendered *uttereth* means properly *to pour forth; to pour forth copiously as a fountain.* Comp. Prov. xviii. 4; i. 23; xv. 2, 28. Hence the word means to utter; to declare. The word *speech* means properly *a word;* and then, a lesson; or that which speech conveys. The idea is, that the successive days thus impart instruction, or convey lessons about God. The *day* does this by the returning light, and by the steady and sublime movement of the sun in the heavens, and by all the disclosures which are made by the light of the sun in his journeyings. ¶ *And night unto night showeth knowledge.* Knowledge respecting God. Each successive night does this. It is done by the stars in their courses; in their order; their numbers; their ranks; their changes of position; their rising and their setting. There are as many lessons conveyed to man about the greatness and majesty of God by the silent movements of each night as there are by the light of the successive days—just as there may be as many lessons conveyed to the soul about God in the dark night of affliction and adversity, as there are when the sun of prosperity shines upon us.

3. There is *no speech nor language* where *their voice is not heard.* Marg., *Without* these *their voice is heard.* Heb., *Without their voice heard.* The idea in the margin, which is adopted by Professor Alexander, is, that when the heavens give expression to the majesty and glory of God, it is not by *words,*—by the use of language such as is employed among men. That is, there is a silent but real testimony to the power and glory of their great Author. The same idea is adopted substantially by De Wette. So Rosenmüller renders it, "There is no speech to them, and no words, neither is their voice heard." High as these authorities are, yet it seems to me that the idea conveyed by our common version is probably the correct one. This is the idea in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate. According to this interpretation the meaning is, "There is no nation, there are no men, whatever may be their language, to whom the heavens do not speak, declaring the greatness and glory of God. The language which they speak is universal; and however various the languages spoken by men, however impossible it may be for them to understand each other, yet all can understand the language of the heavens, proclaiming the perfections of the Great Creator. *That* is a universal language which does not need to be expressed in the forms of human speech, but which conveys great truths alike to all mankind." That the passage cannot mean that there is *no* speech, that there are *no* words, or that there is *no* language in the lessons conveyed by the heavens, seems to me to be clear from the fact that alike in the previous verse (ver. 2), and in the following verse (ver. 4), the psalmist says that they *do* use speech or language, "Day unto day uttereth *speech;*" "their *words* unto the end of the world." The phrase "*their* voice" refers to the heavens (ver. 1). They utter a clear and distinct voice to mankind; that is, they convey to men true and just notions of the greatness of the Creator. The meaning, then, it seems to me, is that the same great lessons about God are

4 Their [1] line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

[1] Or, *rule*, or, *direction*.

In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and*

conveyed by the heavens, in their glory and their revolutions, to all nations; that these lessons are conveyed to them day by day, and night by night; that however great may be the diversities of speech among men, these convey lessons in a universal language understood by all mankind; and that thus God is making himself constantly known to all the dwellers on the earth. All men can understand the language of the heavens, though they may not be able to understand the language of each other. Of the truth of this no one can doubt; and its beauty is equal to its truth.

4. *Their line.* That is, of the heavens. The word here used—קָו, *kav* —means properly a cord, or line; (*a*), a measuring line, Ezek. xlvii. 3; Job xxxviii. 5; Isa. xliv. 13; and then (*b*) a cord or string as of a lyre or other instrument of music; and hence *a sound.* So it is rendered here by the LXX., φθόγγος. By Symmachus, ἦχος. By the Vulgate, *sonus.* De Wette renders it *Klang*, sound. Prof. Alexander dogmatically says that this is "entirely at variance with the Hebrew usage." That this sense, however, is demanded in the passage seems to be plain, not only from the sense given to it by the ancient versions, but by the parallelism, where the term "*words*" corresponds to it:—

"Their *line* is gone out through all the earth;
Their *words* to the end of the world."

Besides, what could be the sense of saying that their *line*, in the sense of a *measuring line*, or *cord*, had gone through all the earth? The plain meaning is, that sounds conveying instruction, and here connected with the idea of sweet or musical sounds, had gone out from the heavens to all parts of the world, conveying the knowledge of God. There is no allusion to the notion of the "music of the spheres," for this conception was not known to the Hebrews; but the idea is that of sweet or musical sounds, not harsh or grating, as proceeding from the movements of the heavens, and conveying these lessons to man. ¶ *And their words.* The lessons or truths which they convey. ¶ *To the end of the world.* To the uttermost parts of the earth. The language here is derived from the idea that the earth was a plane, and had limits. But even with our correct knowledge of the figure of the earth, we use similar language when we speak of the "uttermost parts of the earth." ¶ *In them.* That is, in the heavens, ver. 1. The meaning is, that the sun has his abode or dwelling-place, as it were, in the heavens. The *sun* is particularly mentioned, doubtless, as being the most prominent object among the heavenly bodies, as illustrating in an eminent manner the glory of God. The sense of the whole passage is, that the heavens in general proclaim the glory of God, and that this is shown in a particular and special manner by the light, the splendour, and the journeyings of the sun. ¶ *Hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.* A *tent;* that is, a dwelling-place. He has made a dwelling-place there for the sun. Comp. Habak. iii. 11, "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

5. *Which* is *as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.* That is, when he rises in the morning. He rises from the darkness of the night, and comes forth as the bridegroom comes out of the chamber where he has slept. The allusion is to the bright, and joyful, and cheerful aspect of the rising sun. The image of the bridegroom is employed because we associate with a bridegroom the idea of hilarity, cheerfulness, joy. The essential image is that the sun seems to rise from a

rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

7 The [1] law of the LORD *is*

[1] *doctrine.*

night of repose, as man does in the morning, and that after such a night of repose he goes forth with cheerfulness and alacrity to the employments of the day. The figure is an obvious but a very beautiful one, though there is a transition from the image employed in the previous verse, where the sun is represented as dwelling in a tent or tabernacle fitted up for it in the heavens. In the next member of the sentence the figure is again changed, by his being represented as a man prepared to run a race. ¶ And *rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.* As a man who is vigorous and powerful, when he enters on a race. He is girded for it; he summons all his strength; he seems to exult in the idea of putting his strength to the test, and starting off on his career. Comp. Notes on 1 Cor. ix. 24–27. The same comparison which is employed here occurs in the Zendavesta, ii. 106. *De Wette.* —The idea is that the sun seems to have a long journey before him, and puts forth all his vigour, exulting in the opportunity of manifesting that vigour, and confident of triumphing in the race.

6. *His going forth.* The psalmist now *describes* that race which he has to run, as borne over the entire circuit of the heavens, from one end of it to another,—sweeping the whole space across the firmament. ¶ Is *from the end of the heaven.* From one end of the heaven; that is, from the East, where he starts. ¶ *And his circuit.* The word here used—תְּקוּפָה, *tekoophah*—means properly *a coming about,* or *a return,* as of the seasons, or of the year. It is found only in Ex. xxxiv. 22, "At the year's *end*;" 1 Sam. i. 20, "When the time was *come about*" (Marg., *in revolution of days*); 2 Chron. xxiv. 23, "At the end of the year" (Marg., *in the revolution of the year*). The word here does not refer to the fact that the sun comes round to the starting-point on the following day, but to the sweep or circuit which he makes in the heavens from one end of it to the other,—travelling over the entire heavens. ¶ *Unto the ends of it.* That is, to the other side of the heavens. The plural term is here used perhaps from the idea of *completeness,* or to denote that there was nothing beyond. The complete journey was made. ¶ *And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* The rays of the sun penetrate everywhere. Nothing escapes it. It is not a mere march for show and splendour; it is not an idle and useless journey in the heavens; but all things,—vegetables, birds, beasts, men,—all that lives,—feel the effect of his vital warmth, and are animated by his quickening influence. Thus the sun in his goings illustrates the glory of God. The psalmist was fully alive to the splendour, the glory, and the value of this daily march over the heavens, and shows that while, as in the remainder of the psalm, he dwells on the law of the Lord as having another sphere, and in its place more fully illustrating the Divine glory, he is not by any means insensible to the grandeur and beauty of the *works* of God as showing forth the Divine perfections.

7. *The law of the* LORD. Marg., *doctrine.* The word here used—תּוֹרָה, *torah*—is that which is commonly employed in the Old Testament with reference to the law of God, and is usually rendered *law.* The word properly means *instruction, precept,* from a verb signifying *to teach.* It is then used with reference to instruction or teaching in regard to conduct, and is thus applied to all that God has communicated to guide mankind. It does not here, nor does

it commonly, refer exclusively to the *commands* of God, but it includes all that God has revealed to teach and guide us. It refers here to *revealed truth* as contradistinguished from the truth made known by the works of creation. Comp. Notes on Ps. i. 2. There are *six* epithets used in these verses (7–9) to describe the revealed truth of God, all referring to the same truths, but with reference to some distinct view of the truths themselves, or of their effect on the soul: to wit, *law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear,* and *judgments.* Of the revealed truth of God, thus characterized by distinct epithets, a particular statement is first made in each case in regard to the truth itself as viewed in that special aspect, and then the effects of that revealed truth on the soul are described corresponding with that truth as so viewed. Thus, of the "*law* of the Lord" it is said (*a*) that it is *perfect,* (*b*) that it *converts* the soul;—of the "*testimony* of the Lord," (*a*) that it is *sure,* (*b*) that it makes the simple *wise;*—of the "*statutes* of the Lord," (*a*) that they are *right,* (*b*) that they *rejoice* the heart;—of the "*commandment* of the Lord," (*a*) that it is *pure,* (*b*) that it *enlightens* the eyes;—of the "*fear* of the Lord," (*a*) that it is *clean,* (*b*) that it *endures for ever;*—of the "*judgments* of the Lord," (*a*) that they are *true* and *righteous,* (*b*) that they are more to be desired than gold, and that they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; that men are warned by them, and that in keeping them there is great reward. ¶ Is *perfect.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on Job i. 1. The meaning is that it lacks nothing in order to its completeness; nothing in order that it might be what it should be. It is complete as a revelation of Divine truth; it is complete as a rule of conduct. As explained above, this refers not only to the *law* of God as the word is commonly employed now, but to the *whole* of Divine truth as revealed. It is absolutely true; it is adapted with consummate wisdom to the wants of man; it is an unerring guide of conduct. There is nothing there which would lead men into error or sin; there is nothing essential for man to know which may not be found there. ¶ *Converting the soul.* The *particular* illustration of the perfection of the law is seen in the fact that it "*converts* the soul;" that is, that it *turns* it from the ways of sin to holiness. The glory of the *works* of God—the heavens, the firmament, the sun, as described in the previous verses—is, that they convey the *knowledge* of God around the world, and that the world is filled with light and life under the genial warmth of the sun; the glory of the *law,* or the revealed truth of God, is, that it bears directly on the *soul* of man, turning him from the error of his ways. and leading him to pursue a life of holiness. It is not said of the "law" of God that it does this by its own power, nor can there be any design here to exclude the doctrine of the Divine agency on the soul; but the statement is, that when the "law" of God *is* applied to the heart, or when the truth of God *is* made to bear on that heart, the legitimate effect is seen in turning the sinner from the error of his ways. This effect of truth is seen everywhere, where it is brought into contact with the heart of man. By placing this *first,* also, the psalmist may perhaps have intended to intimate that this is the *primary design* of the revelation which God has given to mankind; that while great and important effects are produced by the *knowledge* which goes forth from the works of God, converting power goes forth only from the "law" of God, or from revealed truth. It is observable that none of the effects here (vers. 7–12) ascribed to the revealed truth of God, under the various forms in which it is contemplated, are ascribed to the knowledge which goes forth from the contemplation of his works, vers. 1–6. It is not *scientific truth* which converts men, but *revealed truth.* ¶ *The testimony of*

perfect, [1] converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

[1] *restoring.*

8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

the LORD. The word here used—עֵדוּת, *aidooth*—means properly *that which is borne witness to*, and is applied to revealed truth as that which *God bears witness to.* In reference to the truth of what is stated *he* is the witness or the voucher; it is that which *he* declares to be true. Hence the term is applicable to *all* that is revealed as being that which he affirms to be true, and the word may be applied to historical truths; or to precepts or laws; or to statements respecting himself, respecting man, respecting the way of salvation, respecting the fallen world. On all these subjects he has borne witness in his word, pledging his veracity as to the correctness of the statements which are thus made. The word, therefore, refers to the whole of what is revealed in his word, considered as that to the truth of which *he bears witness.* The word is often used in this sense: Ps. lxxxi. 5; cxix. 14, 31, 36, 88, 99, 111, 129, 144, 157; Jer. xliv. 23. It is often also applied to the two tables of the law laid up in the ark, which is hence called "the ark of the *testimony*:" Ex. xvi. 34; xxv. 16, 21, 22; xxvi. 33; xxx. 26, *et sæpe.* ¶ Is *sure.* Established, firm. That "testimony," or that revealed truth, is not unsettled, vacillating, uncertain. It is so certain that it may be relied on; so well established, that it cannot be shaken. ¶ *Making wise the simple.* The word rendered *simple*—פֶּתִי, *pethi*—means *simplicity, folly*, Prov. i. 22; and then, simple in the sense of being *open to persuasion, easily seduced:* Prov. vii. 7; xxii. 3; xxvii. 12; Ps. cxvi. 6. Then it means *credulous*, Prov. xiv. 15; and *inexperienced*, Ps. xix. 7. Gesenius, *Lex.* The meaning here is evidently *inexperienced* in the sense of being ignorant or untaught. It refers to those who need spiritual guidance and direction, and is applicable to men as they are by nature, as untaught, or needing instruction, but with the idea that their minds are susceptible to impressions, or are open to conviction. Those who are naturally destitute of wisdom, it makes wise. The statement is, that that testimony, or revealed truth, makes them wise in the knowledge of God, or imparts to them real instruction.

8. *The statutes of the* LORD. The word here rendered *statutes* properly means *mandates, precepts*—rules given to any one to guide him, Ps. ciii. 18; cxi. 7. It refers to the laws of God considered as *appointed*, or as the result of Divine *authority.* The *verb* from which this word is derived (Hiphil) means to set over, to give the oversight, to appoint. Hence the idea of laws, or statutes, as the result of such an appointment, or such an authority. ¶ Are *right.* Are equal, just, proper. They are such as are founded in wisdom and equity; not such as are the mere result of arbitrary appointment. The idea is that they are not merely *appointed*, or made binding by *authority*, but that they are in themselves equitable and just. ¶ *Rejoicing the heart.* Making the heart glad by the fact that they *are* equitable and just,—and glad as the result of obedience. It is always a source of true happiness when we can feel that we are under just and equal laws;—laws in themselves right, and laws administered *in* righteousness and truth. ¶ *The commandment of the* LORD. An appellation of the law of God from the idea of *setting up, appointing, constituting;* hence, of *charging*, or *commanding.* The idea here is not so much that the thing is right in itself as that it is *appointed* or *ordered* by God; that it is what he requires. The term is one that is often applied to the laws

9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* [1] true *and* righteous altogether,

[1] *truth.*

of God, Deut. vi. 1; vii. 11; Lev. iv. 13; Gen. xxvi. 5; Ex. xv. 26; xvi. 28; Ps. lxxviii. 7; lxxxix. 31; cxix. 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172, 176. ¶ Is *pure.* Free from all stain; from all imperfection; from any corrupt tendency. ¶ *Enlightening the eyes.* That is, giving us light and knowledge. The *eyes* are mentioned, as it is by them that we see where to go. The reference here is undoubtedly to the mind or soul as being enlightened by the truth of God. We are made by these commandments to *see* what is right and proper; to understand what we should do.

9. *The fear of the* LORD. The word rendered *fear* in this place—יִרְאָה, *yireah*—means properly *fear, terror*, Jonah i. 10; then, reverence, or holy fear, Ps. ii. 11; v. 7; and hence, reverence towards God, piety, religion,—in which sense it is often used. Comp. Prov. i. 7; Job xxviii. 28; Isa. xi. 2. Hence, by metonymy, it means the *precepts* of piety or religion. It is used evidently in this sense here, as referring to revelation, or to revealed truth, in the sense that it promotes proper *reverence* for God, or secures a proper regard for his name and worship. ¶ Is *clean.* The word here used—טָהוֹר, *tâhor*—means properly clear, pure, in a physical sense, as opposed to filthy, soiled; then, in a ceremonial sense, as opposed to that which is profane or common (Lev. xiii. 17), and then, in a moral sense, as a clean heart, etc., Ps. xii. 6; li. 10. It is also applied to pure gold, Ex. xxv. 11. The sense here is, that there is nothing in it that tends to corrupt the morals, or defile the soul. Everything connected with it is of a pure or holy tendency, adapted to cleanse the soul and to make it holy. ¶ *Enduring for ever.* Standing to all eternity. Not temporary; not decaying; not destined to pass away. It stands firm now, and it will stand firm for ever. That is, the law of God, considered as adapted to make the heart holy and pure, is eternal. What it is now it will always be. What its teaching is now it will continue to be for ever. ¶ *The judgments of the* LORD. The word here rendered *judgments* refers also to the revealed truth of God, with the idea that that has been *judged* or *determined* by him to be right and to be best. It is the result of the Divine adjudication as to what is true, and what is best for man. The word is often used in this sense. Comp. Exod. xxi. 1; Lev. xviii. 5; xxvi. 43; comp. Ps. ix. 7, 16; x. 5. ¶ Are *true.* Marg., *truth.* So the Hebrew. That is, they accord entirely with the *truth*, or are a correct representation of the reality of things. They are not arbitrary, but are in accordance with what is right. This supposes that there is such a thing as *truth* in itself, and the Divine law conforms to that;—not that God determines a thing by mere will, and that it is, therefore, right. God is infinitely perfect, and what he does will be always right, for that is in accordance with his nature; but still his judgments are right, not because he *makes* that to be right which is determined by his will, but because his will is always in accordance with what *is* right. ¶ And *righteous altogether.* That is, they are, without exception, just; or, they are altogether or wholly righteous. There is no one of them which is not just and proper. All that God determines, whether in giving or in executing his laws,—all in his requirements, and all in the administration of his government,—is always and wholly righteous. It is precisely what it *should be* in the case, and is, therefore, worthy of universal confidence.

10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and [1] the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

[1] *the dropping of honeycombs.*

10. *More to be desired* are they *than gold.* That is, his law; or, as in the preceding verse, his judgments. They are more *valuable* than gold; they are of such a nature that the soul should more desire to be in possession of them than to be in possession of gold, and should value them more. The psalmist here and in the following verses describes his estimate of the worth of revealed truth as he perceived it. In the previous verses he had shown its value in the abstract; he here speaks of his own feelings in regard to it, and shows that *he* esteems it more than he did the objects most prized and valued among men. ¶ *Yea, than much fine gold.* The word here used — פָּז, *poz* — means properly that which is purified or pure, and thus becomes an epithet of gold, particularly of gold that is purified. It is rendered *fine gold* here, as in Ps. cxix. 127; Prov. viii. 19; Cant. v. 11, 15; Isa. xiii. 12; Lam. iv. 2; and *pure gold* in Ps. xxi. 3. The word does not occur elsewhere. Gold is an article of principal value among men; and the object here is to show that to a pious mind the revealed truth of God is esteemed to be the most valuable of all things—a treasure above all which men can accumulate, and all which men can prize. Every truly pious heart will respond to the sentiment expressed here. ¶ *Sweeter also than honey.* Honey, the sweetest of all substances, and regarded as an article of luxury, or as most grateful to the taste. It entered largely into the food of the inhabitants of Palestine, as it does now in Switzerland and in some parts of Africa. The idea is that the truth of God, as revealed, is more grateful to the heart, or affords more pleasure to the soul, than that which is esteemed as the highest luxury to the palate. The meaning is, that it is loved; it is pleasant; it is agreeable; it is not regarded merely as *necessary*, and admitted to the soul because it is needful, as medicine is, but it is received into the soul because it is delighted in, or is more agreeable and pleasant than the most luscious article of food is to the taste. To this, also, the heart of every one who "has tasted the good word of God" will respond. ¶ *And the honeycomb.* Marg., *dropping of honeycombs.* So the Hebrew. The allusion is to honey that drops from the combs, and therefore the most pure honey. That which is *pressed* from the combs will have almost inevitably a mixture of bee-bread and of the combs themselves. That which naturally *flows* from the comb will be pure.

11. *Moreover by them is thy servant warned.* The word here used—זָהַר, *zahar*—means, properly, to be bright, to shine; then, to cause to shine, to make light; and then, to admonish, to instruct, to warn. The essential idea here is, to *throw light on a subject*, so as to show it clearly; that is, to make the duty plain, and the consequences plain. Comp. Lev. xv. 31; Ezek. iii. 18; xxxiii. 7. The word is rendered *admonished* in Eccl. iv. 13; xii. 12; *warn*, and *warned*, in Ps. xix. 11; 2 Kings vi. 10; 2 Chron. xix. 10; Ezek. iii. 17–21; xxxiii. 3–9; *teach*, in Exod. xviii. 20; and *shine*, in Dan. xii. 3. It does not elsewhere occur. ¶ And *in keeping of them* there is *great reward.* Either as the result of keeping them, or in the act of keeping them. In the former sense it would mean that a careful observance of the laws of God will be *followed* by rewards hereafter; in the other sense, that the *act* of keeping them will be attended with so much peace and happiness as to constitute of itself an ample reward. In both these senses is the assertion

12 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

here made a correct one. Both will be found to be true. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense. Perhaps the language implies both. The phrase "thy servant" refers to the author of the psalm, and shows that in this part of the psalm, in speaking of the "sweetness" of the law of God, and of its value as perceived by the soul, and of the effect of keeping that law, he is referring to his own experience.

12. *Who can understand* his *errors?* The word rendered *errors* is derived from a verb which means to wander, to go astray; then, to do wrong, to transgress. It refers here to wanderings, or departures from the law of God, and the question seems to have been asked in view of the purity, the strictness, and the extent of the law of God. In view of a law so pure, so holy, so strict in its demands, and so extended in its requirements,—asserting jurisdiction over the thoughts, the words, and the whole life,—who can recall the number of times that he has departed from such a law? A sentiment somewhat similar is found in Ps. cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection; thy commandment is exceeding broad." The language is such as every man who has any just sense of the nature and the requirements of the law, and a just view of his own life, must use in reference to himself. The reason why any man is elated with a conviction of his own goodness is that he has no just sense of the requirements of the law of God; and the more any one studies that law, the more will he be convinced of the extent of his own depravity. Hence the importance of preaching the law, that sinners may be brought to conviction of sin; hence the importance of presenting it constantly before the mind of even the believer, that he may be kept from pride, and may walk humbly before God. And who *is* there that can understand his own errors? Who can number up the sins of a life? Who can make an estimate of the number of impure and unholy thoughts which, in the course of many years, have flitted through, or found a lodgment in the mind? Who can number up the words which have been spoken and should not have been spoken? Who can recall the forgotten sins and follies of a life—the sins of childhood, of youth, of riper years? There is but one Being in the universe that can do this. To him all this is known. Nothing has escaped his observation; nothing has faded from his memory. Nothing can prevent his making a full disclosure of this if he shall choose to do so. It is in his power at any moment to overwhelm the soul with the recollection of all this guilt; it is in his power to cover us with confusion and shame at the revelation of the judgment-day. Our only hope—our only security—that he will not do this, is in his mercy; and that he may not do it, we should without delay seek his mercy, and pray that our sins may be so blotted out that they shall *not* be disclosed to us and to assembled worlds when we appear before him. ¶ *Cleanse thou me from secret* faults. The word here rendered *secret* means that which is hidden, covered, concealed. The reference is to those errors and faults which had been hidden from the eye of him who had committed them, as well as from the eye of the world. The sense is, that the law of God is *so* spiritual, and *so* pure, and *so* extended in its claims, that the author of the psalm felt that it must embrace many things which had been hidden even from his own view,—errors and faults lying deep in the soul, and which had never been developed or expressed. From these, as well as from those sins which had been manifest to himself and to the world, he prayed that he might be cleansed. These are the things that pollute the soul; from these the soul

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins;* let them not have dominion [g] over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from [1] the great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth,

[g] Rom. vi. 12—14. [1] Or, *much.*

must be cleansed, or it can never find permanent peace. A man who does *not* desire to be cleansed from all these "secret faults" cannot be a child of God; he who is a child of God will pray without ceasing that from these pollutions of the soul he may be made pure.

13. *Keep back thy servant also.* Restrain thy servant; or, do not suffer him to commit those sins. ¶ *From presumptuous* sins. The word here used is manifestly designed to stand in some respects in contrast with the *secret faults* mentioned in the previous verse. The word—זד, *zaid*—means properly that which is *boiling, swelling, inflated;* then *proud, arrogant;* with the accessory notion of shameless wickedness or impiety. Gesenius, *Lex.* The word is rendered *proud* in Ps. lxxxvi. 14; cxix. 21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122; Prov. xxi. 24; Isa. xiii. 11; Jer. xliii. 2; Mal. iii. 15; iv. 1. It does not occur elsewhere. The prevailing thought is that of *pride,* and the reference is particularly to sins which proceed from self-confidence; from reliance on one's own strength. The word does not mean *open* sins, or *flagrant* sins, so much as those which spring from self-reliance or pride. The prayer is substantially that he might have a proper distrust of himself, and might not be left by an improper reliance on his own power to the commission of sin. This also is said in view of the extent and spirituality of the law of God—expressing the earnest desire of the author of the psalm that he might not be left to violate a law so pure and holy. ¶ *Let them not have dominion over me.* Let them not *reign* over me; that is, let them not get the mastery or the ascendancy over me. Let me not become the slave of sin; so subject to it that it shall domineer over me. Sin often secures that kind of triumph or mastery over the mind, making a slave of him who yields to it. The pious man alone is a true freeman. He is emancipated from the dominion of sin, and walks in true liberty: see John viii. 32, 36; Gal. v. 1. ¶ *Then shall I be upright.* Heb., *I shall be perfect.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on ver. 7. It means here that he would be truly a servant of God; or, that he would have this evidence that he was a friend of God, that he was kept from the indulgence of secret faults, and from open transgressions—that is, his piety would have completeness of parts; or, it would be shown to be true and genuine. It cannot be demonstrated from the use of the word that he supposed that he would be absolutely perfect or free from all sin. See Notes on Job i. 1. ¶ *And I shall be innocent.* This does not mean that he would be absolutely innocent, or free from all sin; but it means here, as it is explained in the following phrase, that he would be innocent of the great transgression, or would be free from that. ¶ *From the great transgression.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *much.* It does not refer to any one specific offence, but it means that he would be free from the transgression which would exist if he were *not* cleansed from secret faults, and if he were *not* kept back from presumptuous sins. He would be saved from the great guilt which would ensue if he should give unchecked indulgence to secret faults, and if he should be allowed to commit the open sins which were the result of pride and over-weening self-confidence.

14. *Let the words of my mouth.* The words that I speak; *all* the words that I speak. ¶ *And the meditation of my heart.* The thoughts of my heart. ¶ *Be acceptable in thy*

and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight,

O LORD, my [1] strength and my redeemer.

[1] *rock.*

sight. Be such as thou wilt approve; or, be such as will be *pleasing* to thee; such as will give thee delight or satisfaction; such as will be agreeable to thee. Comp. Prov. xiv. 35; Isa. lvi. 7; lx. 7; Jer. vi. 20; Exod. xxviii. 38; Lev. xxii. 20, 21; xix. 5. This supposes (*a*) that God has such control over our thoughts and words, that he can cause us to order them aright; (*b*) that it is proper to pray to him to exert such an influence on our minds that our words and thoughts may be right and pure; (*c*) that it is one of the sincere desires and wishes of true piety that the thoughts and words *may be* acceptable or pleasing to God. The great purpose of the truly pious is, not to please themselves, or to please their fellow-men, (comp. Gal. i. 10), but to please God. The great object is to secure acceptance with him; to have such thoughts, and to utter such words, that He can look upon them with approbation. ¶ *O* LORD *my strength.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *rock.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *And my redeemer.* On the word here used, see Notes on Job xix. 25; comp. Isa. xli. 14; xliii. 14; xliv. 6, 24; xlvii. 4; lxiii. 16. The two things which the psalmist here refers to in regard to God, as the appellations dear to his heart, are (*a*) that God is his *Rock*, or *strength*; that is, that he was his defence and refuge; and (*b*) that he had *rescued* or *redeemed* him from sin; or that he looked to him as alone able to redeem him from sin and death. It is not necessary to inquire here how far the psalmist was acquainted with the plan of salvation as it would be ultimately disclosed through the great Redeemer of mankind; it is sufficient to know that he had an *idea* of redemption, and that he looked to God *as* his Redeemer, and believed that he could rescue him from sin. The psalm, therefore, which begins with a contemplation of God *in his works,* appropriately closes with a contemplation of God *in redemption;* or brings before us the great thought that it is not by the knowledge of God as we can gain it from his works of creation that we are to be saved, but that the most endearing character in which he can be manifested to us is in the work of redemption, and that wherever we *begin* in our contemplation of God, it becomes us to *end* in the contemplation of his character as our Redeemer.

PSALM XX.

This psalm purports to be "A Psalm of David," nor is there any reason to doubt that he wrote it. Of the precise occasion on which it was composed nothing can be known with certainty, for there is no historical statement on the point, and there is nothing in the psalm to indicate it. It would seem, however, from the psalm, that it was composed on some occasion when the king was about going to war, and that it was designed to be used by the people of the nation, and by the king and his hosts mustered for war, as expressing mutually their wishes in regard to the result, and their confidence in each other and in God. Or if it was not designed to be *used* by the people actually, it was intended to be a poetic expression of the real feelings of the king and the people in regard to the enterprise in which he was embarked.

According to this idea, and as seems to me to be manifest on the face of the psalm, it is composed of alternate parts *as if* to be used by the people, and by the king and his followers, in alternate responses, closing with a chorus to be used by all. If it was intended to be employed in public service, it was doubtless to be sung by alternate choirs, representing the people and the king.

The whole may be divided into three strophes or parts:—

I. The first strophe, vers. 1-5.

(*a*) THE PEOPLE, vers. 1-5. They pray that the Lord would defend the king in the day of trouble; that the name of the God of Jacob would defend him; that he would send him help from the sanctuary, and strengthen

PSALM XX.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

THE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob [1] defend thee.

[1] *set thee on an high place.*

him out of Zion; that he would remember his offerings and accept his burnt sacrifice; that he would grant him according to his own heart, and fulfil all his counsel.

(*b*) THE KING, ver. 5, part first. He says, as expressive of the feeling with which the expedition was undertaken, "We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

II. The second strophe, ver. 5 (latter part), and ver. 6.

(*a*) THE PEOPLE, ver. 5, latter clause; expressing a desire for his success and triumph, "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions."

(*b*) THE KING, ver. 6; expressing confidence of success from the observed zeal and co-operation of the people:—"Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand."

III. GENERAL CHORUS OF ALL, vers. 7–9. This is the language of exultation and triumph in God; of joyful trust in him. "Some," is the language of this chorus, "trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God," ver. 7. Then they see their enemies fallen and subdued, while their armies stand upright and firm, ver. 8. Then they call, in joyful exultation and triumph, on God as *the great King over all*, and supplicate his mercy and favour, ver. 9.

This is, therefore, a *patriotic* and *loyal* psalm, full of confidence in the king as he starts on his expedition, full of desire for his success, and full of confidence in God; expressing union of heart between the sovereign and the people, and the union of all their hearts in the great God.

On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv.

1. *The* LORD *hear thee in the day of trouble.* According to the view expressed in the introduction to the psalm, this is the language of the people praying for their king, or expressing the hope that he would be delivered from trouble, and would be successful in what he had undertaken, in the prosecution of a war apparently of defence. The word "trouble" here used would seem to imply that he was beset with difficulties and dangers; perhaps, that he was surrounded by foes. It seems that he was going forth to war to deliver his country from trouble, having offered sacrifices and prayers (ver. 3) for the purpose of securing the Divine favour on the expedition. The *point* or the *moment* of the psalm is when those sacrifices had been offered, and when he was about to embark on his enterprise. At that moment the people lift up the voice of sympathy and of encouragement, and pray that those sacrifices might be accepted, and that he might find the deliverance which he had desired. ¶ *The name of the God of Jacob.* The word *name* is often put in the Scriptures for the person himself; and hence this is equivalent to saying, "May the God of Jacob defend thee." See Ps. v. 11; ix. 10; xliv. 5; liv. 1; Exod. xxiii. 21. Jacob was the one of the patriarchs from whom, after his other name, the Hebrew people derived their name *Israel*, and the word seems here to be used with reference to the *people* rather than to the ancestor. Comp. Isa. xliv. 2. The God of Jacob, or the God of Israel, would be synonymous terms, and either would denote that he was the Protector of the nation. As such he is invoked here; and the prayer is, that the Great Protector of the Hebrew people would now defend the king in the dangers which beset him, and in the enterprise which he had undertaken. ¶ *Defend thee.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *set thee on a high place.* The word means the same as *defend* him, for the idea is that of being set on a high place, a tower, a mountain, a lofty rock, where his enemies could not reach or assail him.

2 Send [1] thee help from the sanctuary, [2] and strengthen thee out of Zion.

[1] *thy help.* [2] *support.*

3 Remember all thy offerings, and [3] accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.

[3] *turn to ashes,* or, *make fat.*

2. *Send thee help.* Marg., *thy help.* So the Hebrew. The idea is, such help as he needed; such as would make him safe. ¶ *From the sanctuary.* From the *tabernacle*, or the holy place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed to reside, Ex. xxviii. 43; xxix. 30; xxxv. 19; xxxix. 1. This was his seat; his throne; where he abode among the people. Here, too, it would seem that he had been worshipped, and his aid implored, in view of this expedition; here the royal psalmist had sought to secure the Divine favour by the presentation of appropriate sacrifices and offerings (ver. 3). The prayer here is, that God would accept those offerings, and hear those supplications, and would now send the desired help from the sanctuary where he resided; that is, that he would grant his protection and aid. ¶ *And strengthen thee.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *support thee.* The idea is, that he would grant his upholding hand in the day of peril. ¶ *Out of Zion.* The place where God was worshipped; the place where the tabernacle was reared. See Notes on Ps. ii. 6.

3. *Remember all thy offerings.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on Isa. i. 13, where it is rendered *oblations.* The word occurs often in the Scriptures, and is sometimes rendered *offering*, and sometimes *oblation.* The word means an offering of any kind or anything that is presented to God, except a bloody sacrifice,—anything offered as an expression of thankfulness, or with a view to obtain his favour. It is distinguished from bloody sacrifices, which are expressed by the word in the following clause. The word here employed occurs in the Psalms only in the following places: xx. 3; xl. 6; xcvi. 8; where it is rendered *offering* and *offerings;*—xlv. 12, rendered *gift;*—lxxii. 10, rendered *presents;*—and cxli. 2, rendered *sacrifice.* The use of the word in this place proves that such offerings had been made to God by him who was about to go forth to the war; and the prayer of the people here is that God would *remember* all those offerings; that is, that he would grant the blessing which he who had offered them had sought to obtain. ¶ *And accept.* Marg., *turn to ashes,* or *make fat.* The Hebrew word—דָּשֵׁן, *dashain*—means properly to make fat, or marrowy, Prov. xv. 30; to pronounce or regard as fat; to be fat or *satiated,* or *abundantly satisfied,* Prov. xiii. 4. It conveys also the notion of reducing to ashes; perhaps from the fact that the victim which had been fattened for sacrifice was reduced to ashes; or, as Gesenius supposes (*Lex,* see דָּשֵׁן), because "ashes were used by the ancients for *fattening*, i. e., manuring the soil." The prayer here seems to be that God would "pronounce the burnt-offering *fat;*" that is, that he would regard it favourably, or would accept it. This proves, also, that a sacrifice *had* been made with a view to propitiate the Divine favour in regard to the expedition which had been undertaken; that is, a solemn act of devotion, according to the manner of worship which then obtained, had been performed with a view to secure the Divine favour and protection. The example is one which suggests the propriety of always entering upon any enterprise by solemn acts of worship, or by supplicating the Divine blessing; that is, by acknowledging our dependence on God, and asking his guidance and his protecting care. ¶ *Thy burnt sacrifice.* The word here used denotes *bloody offerings;* see Notes on Isa. i. 11. These offerings were designed especially for the

4 Grant thee according to thine heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

[1] *heaven of his holiness.*

6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed: he will hear him from [1] his holy heaven [2] with the saving strength of his right hand.

[2] *by the strength of the salvation of.*

expiation of sin, and for thus securing the Divine favour. They were an acknowledgment of guilt, and they were offered with a view to secure the pardon of sin, and, in connexion with that, the favour of God. In similar circumstances *we* approach God, not by an offering which *we* make, whether bloody or bloodless, but through the one great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross for the sins of the world.

4. *Grant thee according to thine own heart.* According to thy wishes; according to the desires of thy heart. ¶ *And fulfil all thy counsel.* All that thou hast designed or undertaken in the matter; that is, may he enable thee to execute thy purpose.

5. *We will rejoice in thy salvation.* According to the idea of the psalm suggested in the introduction, this is a response of the king and those associated with him in going forth to battle. It expresses the joy which they would have in the expected deliverance from danger, and their conviction that through his strength they would be able to obtain it. The word *salvation* here means *deliverance;* to wit, from the anticipated danger. The phrase implies that *God* would interpose to save them; it expresses alike their confidence in that, and the fact that such a deliverance would fill their hearts with joy and rejoicing. ¶ *And in the name of our God.* This indicates a sense of dependence on God, and also that the enterprise undertaken was in order to promote his honour and glory. It was not in their own strength, nor was it to promote the purposes of conquest and the ends of ambition; it was that God might be honoured, and it was with confidence of success derived from his anticipated aid. ¶ *We will set up* our *banners.* We will erect our standards; or, as we should say, *we will unfurl our flag.* All people, when they go to war, have standards or banners, whether flags or some other ensigns, around which they rally; which they follow; under which they fight; and which they feel bound to defend. Each nation has its own standard; but it is difficult to determine what precisely was the form of the standards used among the ancient Hebrews. Military standards, however, were early used (comp. Numb. i. 52; ii. 2, 3, 10, 18, 25; x. 14, 25), and indeed were necessary whenever armies were mustered for war. For the forms of ancient standards, see the article in Kitto's Cyclopædia of Bib. Lit., art. *Standards.* ¶ *The* LORD *fulfil all thy petitions.* The prayers offered in connexion with the sacrifice referred to in ver. 3 (comp. ver. 4). This, according to the view suggested in the introduction, is the response of the people, expressing their desire that the king might be successful in what he had undertaken, and that the prayers which had been offered for success might be answered.

6. *Now know I that the* LORD *saveth his anointed.* Saveth, or will save, the king, who had been *anointed,* or consecrated by anointing to that office. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 2. This, according to the view given in the introduction, is the response of *the king.* It expresses his confident assurance of success from the interest which the people had expressed in the enterprise, as referred to in the previous verses, and from the earnestness of their prayers in his behalf and in behalf of the enterprise. They had

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

8 They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright.

manifested such zeal in the cause, and they had offered so earnest petitions, that he could not doubt that God would smile favourably on the undertaking, and would grant success. ¶ *He will hear him from his holy heaven.* Marg., *from the heaven of his holiness.* So the Hebrew. Comp. 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 14; Neh. ix. 27, 28; Ps. xiv. 2; cii. 19. Heaven is represented as the dwelling-place of God, and it is there that he hears and answers our prayers. The meaning of the word *hear* in this passage is, that he will *favourably hear,* or regard; that is, that he will *answer* the petition, or grant the request. ¶ *With the saving strength.* That is, he will interpose with that saving strength. Literally, "*with the strengths of salvation.*" The answer to the prayer will be manifest in the strength or power put forth by him to save. ¶ *Of his right hand.* The right hand is the instrument by which mainly we execute our purposes; and by constant use it becomes in fact more fully developed, and is stronger than the left hand. Hence it is used to denote *strength.* See Ex. xv. 6; Judges v. 26; Notes on Ps. xvii. 7; xviii. 35.

7. *Some* trust *in chariots.* This (see introd. to the psalm) seems to be a *general chorus* of the king and the people, expressing the fullest confidence in God, and showing the true ground of their reliance. The general meaning is, that their entire trust was in God. This is put in strong contrast with others, who relied, some on their chariots, and some on their horses, while *they* relied alone on God. They who trusted in horses and in chariots would be overcome; they who trusted in God alone would triumph. The word rendered chariots—רֶכֶב, *raichaib*—means properly *riding,* and then a vehicle for riding, a wagon, a chariot. Here it refers to the war-chariot, or the vehicle for carrying armed men into battle. These furnished great advantages in war, by the speed with which they could be driven against an enemy, and by the facilities in fighting from them. They were usually very simple. They consisted of "a light pole suspended between and on the withers of a pair of horses, the after end resting on a light axletree, with two low wheels. Upon the axle stood a light frame, open behind, and floored for the warrior and his charioteer, who both stood within. On the sides of the frame hung the war-bow, in its case; a large quiver with arrows and darts had commonly a particular sheath. In Persia, the chariots, elevated upon wheels of considerable diameter, had four horses abreast; and in early ages, there were occasionally hooks or scythes attached to the axles."—Kitto, *Cyclo.* In early ages these constituted a main reliance in determining the result of a battle. ¶ *And some in horses.* Some in cavalry, commonly a very material reliance in war. The use of horses in war was early known in the world, for we find mention of them in the earliest periods of history. ¶ *But we will remember the name of the* LORD *our God.* That is, we will remember God—the name, as before remarked, often being used to denote the person. The meaning is, We will not forget that our reliance is not on armies, but on God, the living God. Whatever instrumentality we may employ, we will remember always that our hope is in God, and that he only can give success to our arms.

8. *They are brought down and fallen.* That is, those who trust in chariots and horses. The reference here is undoubtedly to the enemies against whom the king was about to wage war, and the language here is indicative of his certain conviction

9 Save, LORD: let the King hear us when we call.

that they would be vanquished. So certain was he now of this that he could speak of it as if it were already done. "They *are* brought down." He sees them in anticipation prostrate and subdued; he goes forth to war with the certainty on his mind that this would occur. The word rendered *brought down*—כָּרַע, *châra*—means *to bend, to bow* (as the knees); and then it refers to one who bows down before an enemy, that is, one who is subdued, Isa. x. 4; lxv. 12; Ps. lxxii. 9; lxxviii. 31. ¶ *But we are risen, and stand upright.* That is, he sees this in anticipation. He is certain of success and triumph. Depressed though we may now be, yet we are certain of victory.

9. *Save,* LORD. "Jehovah, save." This is still an earnest prayer. Confident as they are of success and triumph, yet they do not forget their dependence on God; they do not forget that victory must come from his hand. There was, indeed, exultation, but it was exultation in the belief that God would grant success—an exultation connected with, and springing from prayer. Prayer is not inconsistent with the most confident anticipation of success in any undertaking; and confidence of success can only spring from prayer. ¶ *Let the King.* That is, let *God,* spoken of here as the Great King. The connexion and the parallelism demand this interpretation, for to God only is this prayer addressed. He is here invoked as the supreme monarch. A king going forth to war implores the protection of a greater king than himself—the King of all nations; and who, therefore, had the disposal of the whole result of the conflict in which he was about to engage. ¶ *Hear us when we call.* As we now call on him; as we shall call on him in the day of battle. Thus the close of the psalm corresponds with the beginning. In the beginning (vers. 1–4) there is an earnest *desire* that God would hear the suppliant in the day of trouble; in the close there is an earnest *prayer* to him from all the people that he *would* thus hear. The desire of the blessing goes forth in the form of prayer, for God only can grant the objects of our desire. The whole psalm, therefore, is an expression of a strong confidence in God; of a sense of the most complete dependence on him; and of that assurance of success which often comes into the soul, in an important and difficult undertaking, when we have committed the whole cause to God. The psalm, too, is a model for us to imitate when we embark in any great and arduous enterprise. The desire for success should be accompanied with earnest prayer and supplication on our part; and when our friends express the desire that we may be successful, there should have been on our part such acts of devotion—such manifest reliance on God—such religious trust—that they can simply pray for our success to be in accordance with our own prayer. Never should we look for success unless our undertaking has been preceded by prayer; and when our best preparations have been made, our hope of success is not primarily and mainly in them, but only in God.

PSALM XXI.

This psalm likewise purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no cause to doubt the correctness of the superscription which ascribes it to him. There is, however, no certain intimation at what time of his life, or on what occasion, it was composed, and it is impossible to determine these points.

The most probable supposition in regard to its composition seems to me to be, that it is a song of thanksgiving for the victory secured in answer to the prayer of himself and the people in the previous psalm. Nothing can be argued, indeed, on this point, from the mere fact that it stands in close connexion with the previous psalm; but there are, it seems to me, internal marks that this was its design, and that it is the expression of a heart overflowing with gratitude, and,

PSALM XXI.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

THE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

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therefore, recalling not merely the immediate blessings of a recent victory, but also the other blessings with which God had crowned his life, vers. 3, 4.

Thus understood in regard to its origin, the psalm may be regarded as divided into the following parts:—

I. Thanksgiving for success, or for granting the object which had been so earnestly sought, vers. 1-7. In this thanksgiving the psalmist says that God had not only granted what had been asked (vers. 1-3), but that he had greatly *exceeded* this:—he had granted far more than had been the literal request. He had added blessings which had not been specifically sought; he had made those blessings permanent and eternal, vers. 4-7.

II. The general truth that *all* the foes of God would thus be overcome, and that the cause of truth would be finally triumphant, vers. 8-12. This was *suggested* by the victory which had been achieved. As God had granted *that* victory,—as he had so easily subdued the enemies of himself and of his people,—as he had gone so far beyond the expectations and the hopes of those who had gone forth to the conflict, the idea is naturally suggested that it would be thus with *all* his foes, and that there would be ultimately a complete victory over them.

III. The expression of an earnest *desire* that God might be thus exalted, and might thus achieve a complete and final victory, ver. 13.

For the meaning of the phrase, "To the chief Musician," in the title to the psalm, see Notes on Ps. iv.

1. *The king shall joy in thy strength.* King David, who had achieved the victory which he had desired and prayed for, Ps. xx. This is in the third person, but the reference is doubtless to David himself, and is to be understood as his own language. If it be understood, however, as the language of *the people*, it is still an ascription of praise to God for his favour to their king. It seems better, however, to regard it as the language of David himself. The word "*strength*" here implies that all the success referred to was to be traced to God. It was not by the prowess of a human arm; it was not by the valour or skill of the king himself; it was by the power of God alone. ¶ *And in thy salvation.* In the salvation or deliverance from foes which thou hast granted, and in all that thou doest to save. The language would embrace *all* that God does to save his people. ¶ *How greatly shall he rejoice!* Not only does he rejoice now, but he ever will rejoice. It will be to him a constant joy. Salvation, now to us a source of comfort, will always be such; and when we once have evidence that God has interposed to save us, it is accompanied with the confident anticipation that this will continue to be the source of our highest joy for ever.

2. *Thou hast given him his heart's desire.* See Notes on Ps. xx. 4. This had been the prayer of the people that God would "grant him according to his own heart, and fulfil all his counsel," and this desire had now been granted. All that had been wished; all that had been prayed for by himself or by the people, had been granted. ¶ *And hast not withholden.* Hast not denied or refused. ¶ *The request of his lips.* The request, or the desire which his lips had uttered. The meaning is, that his petitions had been fully granted. ¶ *Selah.* See Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

3. *For thou preventest him.* Thou goest before him; thou dost anticipate him. See Ps. xvii. 13, margin. Our word *prevent* is now most commonly used in the sense of *hinder, stop,* or

4 He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him, *even* length of days for ever and ever.

intercept. This is not the original meaning of the English word; and the word is never used in this sense in the Bible. The English word, when our translation was made, meant to *go before*, to *anticipate*, and this is the uniform meaning of it in our English version, as it is the meaning of the original. See Notes on Job iii. 12. Comp. Ps. lix. 10; lxxix. 8; lxxxviii. 13; xcv. 2; cxix. 147, 148; Amos ix. 10; Notes on 1 Thess. iv. 15. The meaning here is, that God had *anticipated* him, or his desires. He had gone before him. He had designed the blessing even before it was asked. ¶ *With the blessings of goodness.* Blessings *indicating* goodness on his part; blessings adapted to promote the "good" or the welfare of him on whom they were bestowed. Perhaps the meaning here is, not only that they *were* good, but they *seemed* to be good; they were not "blessings in disguise," or blessings as the result of previous calamity and trial, but blessings where there was no trial—no shadow—no appearance of disappointment. ¶ *Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.* This does not refer to the time of his coronation, or the period when he was crowned a king, but it refers to the victory which he had achieved, and by which he had been made truly a king. He was crowned with triumph; he was shown to be a king; the victory was like making him a king, or setting a crown of pure gold upon his head. He was now a conqueror, and was indeed a king.

4. *He asked life of thee.* An expression similar to this occurs in Ps. lxi. 5, 6, "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; . . . Thou wilt prolong the king's life, and his years to many generations." The expression in both cases implies that there had been a prayer for *life*, as if life were in danger. The expression itself would be applicable to a time of sickness, or to danger of any kind, and here it is used doubtless in reference to the exposure of life in going into battle, or in going forth to war. In this apprehended peril he prayed that God would defend him. He earnestly sought protection as he went forth to the perils of war. ¶ And *thou gavest* it *him.* Thou didst hear and answer his prayer. He was saved from danger. ¶ Even *length of days for ever and ever.* Thou didst grant him more than he asked. He sought life for himself; thou hast not only granted that, but hast granted to him the assurance that he should live in his posterity to all generations. The idea is, that there would be an indefinite continuation of his race. His posterity would occupy his throne, and there would be no end to his reign thus prolonged. Beyond all his petitions and his hopes, God had given the assurance that his reign would be permanent and enduring. We cannot suppose that he understood this as if it were a promise made to him personally, that *he* would live and would occupy the throne for ever; but the natural interpretation is that which would refer it to his posterity, and to the perpetuity of the reign of his family or descendants. A similar promise occurs elsewhere: 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16; comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 50. It is by no means an uncommon thing that God gives us more than we asked in our prayers. The offering of prayer is not only the means of securing the blessing which we asked, but also often of securing much more important blessings which we did not ask. If the expression were allowable it might be said that the prayer *suggested* to the Divine mind the conferring of all needed blessings, or it indicates such a state of mind on the part of him who prays that God *takes occasion* to confer blessings which were not asked;—as a request made by a child to a parent for a specific favour is followed not only by granting *that* favour, but by

5 His glory *is* great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

6 For thou hast [1] made him most blessed for ever: thou hast [2] made him exceeding glad [a] with thy countenance.

[1] *set him* to be *blessings*, Gen. xii. 2.

[2] *gladded him with joy.*

[a] Ps. iv. 6, 7; xvi. 11.

bestowing others of which the child did not think. The state of mind on the part of the child was such as to *dispose* the parent to grant much larger blessings.

5. *His glory is great in thy salvation.* Not in himself; not in anything that he has done, but in what thou hast done. The fact that thou hast saved him, and the manner in which it has been done, has put upon him great honour. He felt indeed that his condition as king, and as to the prospects before him, was one of great "glory" or honour; but he felt at the same time that it was not in *himself*, or for anything that *he* had done: it was only in the "*salvation*" which *God* had conferred upon him. Every child of God, in like manner, has great "glory" conferred upon him, and his "glory" will be great for ever; but it is not in himself, or in virtue of anything that he has done. It is "great" in the "salvation" of God, (*a*) in the *fact* that God has interposed to save him; and (*b*) in the *manner* in which it has been done. The highest honour that can be put upon man is in the fact that God will *save* him. ¶ *Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.* (*a*) In making him a king; (*b*) in the victories and triumphs which thou hast now given him, placing on his head, as it were, a brighter crown; (*c*) in the promised perpetuity of his reign. So we may say of the ransomed sinner—the child of God—now. Honour and majesty have been laid on him, (*a*) in the fact that God has redeemed him; (*b*) in the manner in which this has been accomplished; (*c*) in his adoption into the family of God; (*d*) in the rank and dignity which he occupies as a child of God; (*e*) in the hope of immortal blessedness beyond the grave.

6. *For thou hast made him most blessed for ever.* Marg., as in Heb., *set him* to be *blessings*. The expression in our translation, as it is now commonly understood, would mean that God had made him *happy* or *prosperous*. This does not seem to be the sense of the original. The idea is, that he had made him a blessing to mankind or to the world; or, that he had made him to be a source of blessing to others. Blessings would descend through him; and though in the consciousness of this fact he would be *happy*, and in that sense be "blessed," yet the idea is rather that blessings would be imparted or scattered through him. Blessings would abound to others through his own reign; blessings through the reigns of those who should succeed him in the throne; blessings would be imparted to men as far as the import of the promise extended, that is, for ever, ver. 4. The word "for ever" here undoubtedly, as it was used by the Spirit of inspiration, was designed to refer to the eternal blessings which would descend on mankind through the Messiah, the illustrious descendant of David. How far David himself understood this, is not a material inquiry. He was undoubtedly directed by the Spirit of inspiration to use such language as would fairly and properly express this. It is right, therefore, for *us* so to regard it, and so to interpret and apply it. ¶ *Thou hast made him exceeding glad.* Marg., as in Heb., *gladded him with joy.* The Hebrew phrase means, as it is expressed in our translation, that he had been made very glad, or very happy. The favours of God to him, alike in his protection and in the promises which had been made in reference to the future, were such as to make him happy in the highest de-

7 For [b] the king trusteth in the LORD, and, through the mercy of the Most High, he shall not be moved.

8 Thine hand shall find [c] out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

[b] 1 Sam. xxx. 6; Ps. xxvi. 1.

[c] Amos ix. 2, 3.

gree. ¶ *With thy countenance.* With thy favour. By lifting the light of thy countenance upon him; or, as we should express it, by *smiling* upon him. See Notes on Ps. iv. 6.

7. *For the king.* David, the author of the psalm. ¶ *Trusteth in the* LORD. All these blessings have resulted from his confiding in God, and looking to him for his favour and protection. ¶ *And through the mercy of the Most High.* The favour of Him who is exalted above all;—the most exalted Being in the universe. The word *mercy* here is equivalent to *favour*. He had already experienced God's favour; he looked for a continuance of it; and through that favour he was confident that he would never be shaken in his purposes, and that he would never be disappointed. ¶ *He shall not be moved.* He shall be firmly established. That is, his throne would be firm; he himself would live a life of integrity, purity, and prosperity; and the promises which had been so graciously made to him, and which extended so far into the future, would all be accomplished. The truth taught here is, that however firm or prosperous our way seems to be, the continuance of our prosperity, and the completion of our hopes and our designs, depend wholly on the "mercy" or the favour of the Most High. Confiding in that, we may feel assured that whatever changes and reverses we may experience in our temporal matters, our ultimate welfare will be secure. Nothing can shake a hope of heaven that is founded on his gracious promises as made through a Saviour.

8. *Thine hand shall find out.* That is, Thou wilt find out,—the hand being that by which we execute our purposes. This verse commences a new division of the psalm (see the introd.),—in which the psalmist looks forward to the complete and final triumph of God over *all* his enemies. He looks to this in connexion with what God had done for him. He infers that he who had enabled him to achieve such signal conquests over his own foes and the foes of God would not withdraw his interposition until he had secured a complete victory for the cause of truth and holiness. In connexion with the promise made to him respecting his permanent reign and the reign of his successors on the throne (ver. 4), he infers that God would ultimately subdue the enemies of truth, and would set up his kingdom over all. ¶ *All thine enemies.* However they may attempt to conceal themselves,—however they may evade the efforts to subdue them,—yet they shall *all* be found out and overcome. As this was intended by the Spirit of inspiration, it undoubtedly refers to the final triumph of truth on the earth, or to the fact that the kingdom of God will be set up over all the world. All that are properly ranked among the enemies of God,—all that are in any way opposed to him and to his reign,—will be found out and conquered. All the worshippers of idols,—all the enemies of truth,—all the rejecters of revelation,—all the workers of iniquity,—all that are infidels or scoffers,—shall be found out and subdued. Either by being made to yield to the claims of truth, and thus becoming the friends of God,—or by being cut off and punished for their sins,—they will be all so overcome that God shall reign over all the earth. An important truth is further taught here, to wit, that no enemy of God can escape him. There is no place to which he can flee where God will not find him. "There is

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery [d] oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire [e] shall devour them.

10 Their [f] fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

[d] Mal. iv. 1. [e] Isa. xxvi. 11. [f] Ps. xxxvii. 28.

no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Job xxxiv. 22. ¶ *Thy right hand.* See Notes on Ps. xvii. 7. ¶ *Those that hate thee.* All thine enemies.

9. *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger.* Thou shalt consume or destroy them, as if they were burned in a heated oven. Or, they shall burn, *as if* they *were* a flaming oven; that is, they would be wholly consumed. The word rendered *oven*—תַּנּוּר, *tannoor*—means either an *oven* or a *furnace.* It is rendered *furnace* and *furnaces* in Gen. xv. 17; Neh. iii. 11; xii. 38; Isa. xxxi. 9; and, as here, *oven* or *ovens,* in Exod. viii. 3; Lev. ii. 4; vii. 9; xi. 35; xxvi. 26; Lam. v. 10; Hos. vii. 4, 6, 7; Mal. iv. 1. It does not occur elsewhere. The oven among the Hebrews was in the form of a large *pot,* and was heated from within by placing the wood inside of it. Of course, while being heated, it had the appearance of a furnace. The meaning here is that the wicked would be consumed or destroyed *as if* they were such a burning oven; as if they were set on fire, and burned up. ¶ *The* LORD *shall swallow them up in his wrath.* The same idea of the utter destruction of the wicked is here presented under another form—that they would be destroyed as if the earth should open and swallow them up. Perhaps the allusion in the language is to the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. xvi. 32; comp. Ps. cvi. 17. ¶ *And the fire shall devour them.* The same idea under another form. The wrath of God would utterly destroy them. That wrath is often represented under the image of *fire.* See Deut. iv. 24; xxxii. 22; Ps. xviii. 8; Matt. xiii. 42; xviii. 8; xxv. 41; Mark ix. 44; 2 Thess. i. 8. Fire is the emblem by which the future punishment of the wicked is most frequently denoted.

10. *Their fruit.* Their offspring; their children; their posterity; for so the parallelism demands. The *fruit* is that which the tree produces; and hence the word comes to be applied to children as the production of the parent. See this use of the word in Gen. xxx. 2; Exod. xxi. 22; Deut. xxviii. 4, 11, 18; Ps. cxxvii. 3; Hos. ix. 16; Micah vi. 7. ¶ *Shalt thou destroy from the earth.* Thou shalt utterly destroy them. This is in accordance with the statement so often made in the Scriptures, and with what so often occurs in fact, that the consequences of the sins of parents pass over to their posterity, and that they suffer in consequence of those sins. Comp. Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7; Lev. xx. 5; xxvi. 39; comp. Notes on Romans v. 12–19. ¶ *And their seed.* Their posterity. ¶ *From among the children of men.* From among men, or the human family. That is, they would be entirely cut off from the earth. The truth taught here is, that the wicked will ultimately be destroyed, and that God will obtain a complete triumph over them, or that the kingdom of righteousness shall be at length completely established. A time will come when truth and justice shall be triumphant, when all the wicked shall be removed out of the way; when all that oppose God and his cause shall be destroyed, and when God shall show, by thus removing and punishing the wicked, that he is the Friend of all that is true, and good, and right. The *idea* of the psalmist probably was that this would yet occur on the earth; the *language* is

11 For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device *which* [g] they are not able *to perform:*

12 Therefore shalt thou [1] make them turn their [2] back, *when* thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them.

[g] Ps. ii. 1—4. [1] Or, *set them as a butt.* [2] *shoulder.*

such, also, as may be applied to that ultimate state, in the future world, when all the wicked shall be destroyed, and the righteous shall be no more troubled with them.

11. *For they intended evil against thee.* Literally, "They stretched out evil." The idea seems to be derived from *stretching out* or laying snares, nets, or gins, for the purpose of taking wild beasts. That is, they formed a plan or purpose to bring evil upon God and his cause: as the hunter or fowler forms a purpose or plan to take wild beasts or fowls. It is not merely a purpose in the head, as our word "intended" would seem to imply; it supposes that arrangements had been entered into, or that a scheme had been formed to injure the cause of God,—that is, through the person referred to in the psalm. The purposes of wicked men against religion are usually much more than a mere *intention.* The intention is accompanied with a scheme or plan in their own mind by which the act may be accomplished. The evil here referred to was that of resisting or overpowering him who was engaged in the cause of God, or whom God had appointed to administer his laws. ¶ *They imagined a mischievous device.* They thought, or they purposed. The word rendered "mischievous device"—מְזִמָּה, *mezimmah* —means properly *counsel, purpose;* then *prudence, sagacity;* then, in a bad sense, *machination, device, trick.* Gesenius, *Lex.* Prov. xii. 2; xiv. 17; xxiv. 8. ¶ Which *they are not able* to perform. Literally, "they could not;" that is, they had not the power to accomplish it, or to carry out their purpose. Their purpose was plain; their guilt was therefore clear; but they were prevented from executing their design. Many such designs are kept from being carried into execution for the want of power. If all the devices and the desires of the wicked were accomplished, righteousness would soon cease in the earth, religion and virtue would come to an end, and even God would cease to occupy the throne.

12. *Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back.* Marg., *Thou shalt set them as a butt.* The word *back* also is rendered in the margin *shoulder.* The word translated *therefore* means in this place *for*, and the rendering "*therefore*" obscures the sense. The statement in this verse in connexion with the previous verse, is, that they would not be able to "perform" or carry out their well-laid schemes, *for* or *because* God would make them turn the back; that is, he had vanquished them. They were going forward in the execution of their purposes, but God would interpose and turn them back, or compel them to *retreat.* The word rendered *back* in this place — שֶׁכֶם, *shechem* — means properly *shoulder*, or, more strictly, the *shoulder-blades*, — that is, the part where these approach each other behind; and then the upper part of the back. It is not, therefore, incorrectly rendered by the phrase "thou shalt make them turn *the back.*" The expression is equivalent to saying that they would be defeated or foiled in their plans and purposes. ¶ When *thou shalt make ready* thine arrows *upon thy strings.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 2. That is, when God should go forth against them, armed as a warrior. ¶ *Against the face of them.* Against them; or, in their very front. He would meet them as they seemed to be marching on to certain conquest, and would discomfit them. It would not be by a side-blow, or by skilful

13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own [h] strength: *so* will we sing and praise thy power.

[h] Job ix. 19.

manœuvre, or by turning their flank and attacking them in the rear. Truth meets error boldly, face to face, and is not afraid of a fair fight. In every such conflict error will ultimately yield; and whenever the wicked come openly into conflict with God, they must be compelled to turn and flee.

13. *Be thou exalted,* LORD, *in thine own strength.* This is the concluding part of the psalm (see the introd.), expressing a desire that God *might* be exalted over all his foes; or that his own strength might be so manifestly put forth that he would be exalted as he ought to be. This is the ultimate and chief desire of all holy created beings, that God might be exalted in the estimation of the universe above all other beings,—or that he might so triumph over all his enemies as to reign supreme. ¶ So *will we sing and praise thy power.* That is, as the result of thy being thus exalted to proper honour, we will unite in celebrating thy glory and thy power. Comp. Rev. vii. 10—12; xii. 10; xix. 1—3. This will be the result of all the triumphs which God will achieve in the world, that the holy beings of all worlds will gather around his throne and "sing and praise his power." The *thought* in the psalm is that God will ultimately triumph over all his foes, and that this triumph will be followed by universal rejoicing and praise. Come that blessed day!

PSALM XXII.

I. *The author of the psalm.*—This psalm is said to have been composed by David:—"A Psalm of David;" comp. Notes on the title of Psalm iii. It cannot be absolutely demonstrated that these titles to the psalms are all of them correct, as it cannot be supposed that they were affixed to them by the authors of the psalms themselves; and it is not absolutely known by whom they were prefixed. Of course there is no certain evidence that they were attached to the psalms by an inspired writer. Still they are to be presumed to be correct unless there is some clear evidence to the contrary. In this case there seems to be none. There is nothing in the psalm itself that is inconsistent with the supposition, and there are no historical evidences in the case which would make it necessary for us to set the title aside. The affixing of this title to the psalm undoubtedly implies that it was the prevailing opinion, at the time when the collection of Psalms was made, that this was a psalm of David. Rosenmüller indeed doubts this; but he assigns no historical reasons for the doubt. Hitzig supposes that the author was Jeremiah, on the ground, as he says, that it is "in the broad and flowing style" of Jeremiah, but this is mere conjecture.

It is not necessary, however, to suppose that David, though he was the author of the psalm, refers to himself. If it be admitted that he was inspired, or even if *this* should be doubted, it would still be an open question to whom the psalm refers,—whether to himself as an individual;—whether to an *imaginary* sufferer, designing to illustrate the feelings of piety in a time of sorrow;—whether to the people of God, considered collectively;—or whether to the Messiah. The mere fact of the *authorship* of the psalm determines none of these questions.

It is not known, and it cannot now be determined, on what occasion the psalm was written. It is expressive of the feelings of a pious sufferer,—of one who appears to be forsaken by God and by man. Perhaps there may have been occasions in the life of David to which the expressions in the psalm may have been applicable; but if so, it is impossible now to determine on which *one* of these trials of his life the psalm was composed. There is no one period in which, from the historical records of his life, we could be able to make out all the circumstances which are mentioned in the psalm. There are, however, expressions in it which in their intensity, as expressing wretchedness and woe, seem to go beyond anything that occurred in his experience, and which lead naturally to the question whether he did not refer to some other than himself.

II. *The contents of the psalm.*—Various divisions of the psalm have been proposed, but there are no *marked* and

prominent divisions in the psalm itself. Hengstenberg, and after him Prof. Alexander, divide it into three parts, or strophes, (1) vers. 1-10; (2) vers. 12-21; (3) vers. 22-31. According to this, each strophe, as Hengstenberg remarks, would consist of ten verses,—with an intermediate verse between the 10th and the 12th (ver. 11) connecting the first and second parts. Professor Alexander supposes that ver. 21 is a connecting link also between the second and third parts.

This division, however, seems fanciful and arbitrary; and it will present a more simple and clear view of the psalm to regard it as embracing two main things:—I. The condition of the sufferer; and II. His consolations or supports in his trials.

I. The condition of the sufferer. This consists of two parts:—(1) His sufferings as derived from God, or as they spring from God; (2) as they are derived from men, or as they spring from the treatment which he receives from men.

(1.) As they are derived from God, vers. 1, 2.

(*a*) He is forsaken of God, ver. 1.

(*b*) He cries to him day and night (or continually), and receives no answer, ver. 2.

His prayer seems not to be heard, and he is left to suffer apparently unpitied and alone.

(2) His sufferings as derived from men, as produced by the treatment which he received from men.

Here there are *five* specifications; *five* sources of his affliction and sorrow.

First. He was despised, reproached, derided by them in the midst of his other sufferings, vers. 6, 7, 8;—especially his piety, or confidence in God was ridiculed, for it now seemed as if God had abandoned him.

Second. His enemies were fierce and ravenous as strong bulls of Bashan, or as a ravening and roaring lion, vers. 12, 13.

Third. His sufferings were intense, so that his whole frame was relaxed and prostrated and crushed; he seemed to be poured out like water, and all his bones were out of joint; his heart was melted like wax; his strength was dried up like a potsherd; his tongue clave to his jaws, and he was brought into the dust of death, vers. 14, 15.

Fourth. His enemies pierced his hands and his feet, ver. 16.

Fifth. They stripped him of his raiment, and parted his garments among themselves, ver. 18.

II. His consolations or supports in his trials. These are scattered through the psalm, and consist of the following things:—

(1) His unshaken confidence in God as holy, ver. 3.

(2) His faith in God as the hearer of prayer, and especially on the ground that he *had* heard prayer in times past, vers. 4, 5.

(3) The fact that he had been himself early devoted to God, and cast upon him as his Protector from very childhood, and trained up for him, vers. 9, 10, 11.

(4) The anticipated effect or result of what he was then suffering, or the things to be accomplished *by* his sufferings, vers. 19-31. There are mainly *two* things implied here as to the anticipated result of his sufferings:—

(*a*) The establishment of a great principle that would *encourage* the friends of God, or those whom the sufferer calls his "brethren," vers. 22-26.

(*b*) The world would be converted as the result of his sufferings, and the kingdom of God would be set up everywhere among men, vers. 27-31.

These views of the psalm are apparent on its face, or are such as are suggested by the analysis without reference to the inquiry who was the author, or to whom it refers. The analysis of the psalm, however, necessarily leads—

III. To the inquiry *to whom the psalm refers*:—

(1.) It refers to a sufferer, and it is designed to describe his condition and his feelings, when apparently forsaken by God and man. At the same time, he is a *pious* sufferer, or one who has real trust in God, though God *appears* to have forsaken him.

(2.) There seems to be no reason to suppose that the psalm refers to David himself, or that he means to describe his own feelings and condition. He was indeed a sufferer; and he often refers to his own sufferings in the Psalms. It is true, also, that there are expressions in this psalm which would be applicable to him, or which might refer to his condition. But there are none which can be

regarded as *exclusively* applicable to him, and there are some which could *not* be applied to him. Of the latter class are the expressions, "They pierced my hands and my feet," ver. 16; "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," ver. 18. We know of no circumstances in the life of David to which these expressions would be applicable; we have no reason to suppose that there were any in which what is here said would have been literally true of him. On the other hand, this language cannot with propriety be regarded as *figurative*, for we cannot conceive of any circumstances which would be described by such figures of speech. The whole cast of the psalm, moreover, is different from those in which David refers to his own sufferings.

(3.) The psalm refers to a case not then actually before the psalmist, but to some case that might or would occur, as an individual or as a representative case. So far as the mere *language* of the psalm is concerned, this might have been a case purely imaginary, and the design might have been to describe a pious sufferer who seemed to be forsaken both by God and man, or to illustrate the nature of true submission to God *in* such trials. In other words, it might have been a *supposed* case intended to show the nature of real religion under the severest forms of suffering; and, as a poet, the author of the psalm may have pictured to himself such an instance in order to show what the feelings of true piety would suggest in such circumstances, or what would be the effect of true religion then. It is true that this interpretation would not be quite obvious and natural, for we usually find such descriptions connected with real cases; but I am merely saying that *so far as the language of the psalm is concerned*, if we had no other way to ascertain its meaning, this interpretation would be allowable,—and if we could not attach the psalm properly to any real person, this explanation would be admissible. But in this case such an interpretation is unnecessary, for there *is* a real person to whom the language is applicable, and one to whom we may properly suppose an inspired writer would refer in the language which is here used.

(4.) The psalm refers, therefore, I apprehend, originally and exclusively, to the Messiah. The proof of this is to be found in such circumstances as the following:—

(*a*) Portions of it are expressly applied to him in the New Testament. The cry in ver. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the very one used by the Redeemer when on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 46. The language (ver. 8), "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him," is the taunt which his enemies used as they passed by the cross, Matt. xxvii. 43. The language (ver. 18), "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," is more than once expressly applied to him; and, in one instance, with the unequivocal statement that it was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," John xix. 24. Comp. Luke xxiii. 34.

(*b*) We have evidence derived from the early Jewish interpreters. The modern Jews, indeed, affirm that it has no reference to the Messiah, for they reject the idea of a suffering Messiah altogether. Some of them suppose that it refers to David, and endeavour to find a fulfilment of it in his persecutions and trials. Others, as Kimchi and Jarchi, suppose that the psalm is applicable to the suffering Jewish people, and apply it to them in their trials and dispersions, as if *they* were forsaken of God. Some have supposed that it refers to the condition of the Jews in Babylon. But this was not the prevailing interpretation among the ancient Jewish interpreters. See Jo. H. Michaelis, Com. in Ps., p. 138; and Schöttgen de Messiâ, p. 232, *seq.* It is true that the opinion of the ancient Jews does not *demonstrate* that the psalm refers to the Messiah; but the fact that they *held* that opinion is an important circumstance in showing what is its fair and obvious interpretation, for there was everything to induce *them* to reject this explanation. In general, the Jews who lived in the times referred to here were opposed to the idea of a suffering Messiah; and the fact that they admitted the applicability of the psalm to the Messiah must have embarrassed them not a little in their early controversies with Christians; for the early Christians with one voice maintained that it referred to the Messiah, and that it was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The correspondence between the psalm and his sufferings was one of the arguments on which they relied in proving that he was the Christ; and if the Jews admitted that the psalm had reference to the Messiah, they would find it hard to meet the force of this argument. Their

admission, therefore, under these circumstances, that it referred to the Messiah, could have arisen only from the fair and obvious interpretation of the psalm which it was not easy to set aside.

(*c*) The internal character of the psalm shows that it refers to the Messiah. This will appear more conclusively in the course of the exposition, in the entire correspondence as will be seen there between the psalm and the sufferings of the Redeemer. It will be found that many of the expressions in the psalm are as applicable to him as they would be if they were *history* instead of *prophecy;* if they had been penned *after*, instead of having been penned *before* his sufferings occurred. It is sufficient here to refer to the expressions in vers. 1, 7, 8, 16, 18, and to the Notes on those passages.

(*d*) There is no improbability in supposing that David here refers to the Messiah. It cannot be denied that there *is*, in the Old Testament, from some cause, a frequent reference to a personage who was expected to appear in future time, and who was called *the Messiah*. And it cannot be denied that he is often represented as a sufferer, and that his humiliation and sufferings are often described. *Somehow*, beyond all question, the Jewish writers had formed the conception of such a personage, and they exhaust the powers of their native tongue in their description of his person and his work. He was, in fact, their "*hero;*"—he to whom they always looked, and on whom their descriptions usually terminated, wherever they began. Comp. Notes on Isa. liii. and Dan. ix. Now, if it be admitted that the Jewish writers were *inspired*, and that this view of the Messiah had been furnished by the Spirit of inspiration, nothing is more natural than to expect to find such descriptions of the Messiah as occur in this psalm; and if it should be said that they were *not* inspired, and that this anticipation was wholly a poetic fiction,—a matter of national vanity,—a mere favourite *idea* of the nation,—nothing would even then be more natural than that there should be a frequent reference to this imaginary person in their writings; and nothing would be more probable than that we should find frequent reference to him in the writings of one who was so deeply imbued with the national spirit, and who occupied so high a position among the poets of the nation, as David. Inspired or uninspired, then, there is the strongest probability that there would be in their poetic writings such allusions to the Messiah as we have in this psalm.

An examination of the objections to the interpretation which refers the psalm to the Messiah, may be found in Hengstenberg's Christology, vol. i, pp. 145-147.

The *title* of the psalm is, "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar." On the meaning of the expression *chief Musician*, see Notes on the title to Psalm iv. The expression *Aijeleth Shahar* is rendered in the margin, *the hind of the morning*. The word *Aijeleth*—אַיֶּלֶת—means a *hind*, and is used as a term of endearment towards a female, Prov. v. 19. It is found in Gen. xlix. 21, "Naphtali is a *hind* let loose." Also in 2 Sam. xxii. 34; Job xxxix. 1; Ps. xviii. 33; Cant. ii. 7; iii. 5; Hab. iii. 19;—in each of which places it is rendered in the singular *hind*, and in the plural *hinds*. The word *Shahar* — שַׁחַר—means *the aurora, the dawn, the morning*. "The phrase 'hind of the dawn' probably stands for the morning sun scattering his first rays upon the earth, as the Arabian poets call the rising sun *the gazelle*, comparing his rays with the horns of that animal." *Gesenius, Lex.*—The image is one of gladness, *as if* the rays of the sun leaped and bounded over the hills with joyousness as the hart or hind does. But why such a title is given to this psalm can be only a matter of conjecture. It would seem most probable that these words were the beginning of some other psalm or hymn that was sung to a set piece of music, and that the design was, as indicated by this title, that this psalm was to be sung to the same tune. A tune might not improbably be known then, as it is in fact sometimes now, by the first or opening words of the piece which was commonly sung in that measure. Thus we have hymns so constantly sung to certain tunes that the mention of the first line would be a sufficient suggestion of the strain of music in which it was to be sung. It would be, for example, sufficient to say that it was to be sung to the same tune as "From Greenland's icy mountains;" or, "All hail the power of Jesus' name;" or, "I would not live alway." Other views of the meaning of the phrase may be seen in Rosenmüller, *Com. in loc.* Rosenmüller himself adopts the views here expressed, and sustains his opinion by the authority of Bochart.

PSALM XXII.

To the chief Musician upon [1] Aijeleth Shahar. A Psalm of David.

MY [i] God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so* far from [2] helping me, *and from* the words of my [k] roaring?

[1] Or, *the hind of the morning.*

[i] Matt. xxvii. 46; Luke xxiv. 44.
[2] *my salvation.*
[k] Heb. v. 7.

1. *My God, my God.* These are the very words uttered by the Saviour when on the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46); and he evidently used them as best adapted of all the words that could have been chosen to express the extremity of his sorrow. The fact that he employed them may be referred to as *some* evidence that the psalm was designed to refer to him; though it must be admitted that this circumstance is no conclusive proof of such a design, since he might have used words having originally another reference, as best fitted to express his own sufferings. The language is abrupt, and is uttered without any previous intimation of what would produce or cause it. It comes from the midst of suffering—from one enduring intense agony—as if a new form of sorrow suddenly came upon him which he was unable to endure. That new form of suffering was the feeling that now he was forsaken by the last friend of the wretched,—God himself. We may suppose that he had patiently borne all the other forms of trial, but the moment the thought strikes him that he is forsaken of God, he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, under the pressure of anguish which is no longer to be borne. All other forms of suffering he could bear. All others he had borne. But this crushes him; overpowers him; is beyond all that the soul can sustain,—for the soul may bear all else but this. It is to be observed, however, that the sufferer himself still has confidence in God. He addresses him as *his* God, though he seems to have forsaken him:—"*My* God; MY God." ¶ *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Why hast thou abandoned me, or left me to myself, to suffer unaided and alone? As applicable to the Saviour, this refers to those dreadful moments on the cross when, forsaken by men, he seemed also to be forsaken of God himself. God did not interpose to rescue him, but left him to bear those dreadful agonies alone. He bore the burden of the world's atonement by himself. He was overwhelmed with grief, and crushed with pain; for the sins of the world, as well as the agonies of the cross, had come upon him. But there was evidently more than this;—*what* more we are unable fully to understand! There was a higher sense in which he was forsaken of God; for no mere physical sufferings, no pains of dying even on the cross, would have extorted this cry. If he had enjoyed the light of his Father's countenance; if these had been merely physical sufferings; if there was nothing else than what is apparent to our view in the record of those sufferings, we cannot suppose that this cry would have been heard even on the cross. There is evidently some sense in which it was true that the dying Saviour was given up to darkness—to mental trouble, to despair, *as if* He who is the last hope of the suffering and the dying—the Father of mercies—had withdrawn from him; *as if* he were personally a sinner; *as if* he were himself guilty or blameworthy on account of the sins for which he was making an expiation. In some sense he experienced what the sinner will himself experience when, for his own sins, he will be at last forsaken of God, and abandoned to despair. Every word in this wonderful exclamation may be supposed to be emphatic. "*Why.*" What is the cause? How is it to be accounted for? What end is to be answered by it? "*Hast thou.*" Thou, my Father; thou, the comforter of those in trouble; thou, to whom the suffering and the dying may look when all else fails. "*Forsaken.*" Left me to suffer alone;

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not: and in the night-season, and [1] am not silent.

[1] there is *no silence to me.*

3 But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that inhabitest the praises [l] of Israel.

[l] Ps. lxv. 1.

withdrawn the light of thy countenance—the comfort of thy presence—the joy of thy manifested favour. "*Me.*" Thy well-beloved Son; me, whom thou hast sent into the world to accomplish thine own work in redeeming man; me, against whom no sin can be charged, whose life has been perfectly pure and holy;—why, now, in the extremity of these sufferings, hast thou forsaken *me,* and added to the agony of the cross the deeper agony of being abandoned by the God whom I love, the Father who loved me before the foundation of the world, John xvii. 24. There is a reason why God should forsake the wicked; but why should he forsake his own pure and holy Son in the agonies of death? ¶ Why art thou so *far from helping me?* Marg., *from my salvation.* So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one who stood *so far off* that he could not hear the cry, or that he could not reach out the hand to deliver. Comp. Ps. x. 1. ¶ And from *the words of my roaring.* The word here used properly denotes the roaring of a lion, Job iv. 10; Isa. v. 29; Zech. xi. 3; and then the outcry or the groaning of a person in great pain, Job iii. 24; Ps. xxxii. 3. It refers here to a loud cry for help or deliverance, and is descriptive of the intense suffering of the Redeemer on the cross. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 50; Luke xxiii. 46.

2. *O my God, I cry in the daytime.* This, in connexion with what is said at the close of the verse, "and in the night-season," means that his cry was incessant or constant. See Notes on Ps. i. 2. The whole expression denotes that his prayer or cry was continuous, but that it was not heard. As applicable to the Redeemer it refers not merely to the moment when he uttered the cry as stated in ver. 1, but to the continuous sufferings which he endured as if forsaken by God and men. His life in general was of that description. The whole series of sorrows and trials through which he passed was *as if* he were forsaken by God; *as if* he uttered a long continuous cry, day and night, and was not heard. ¶ *But thou hearest not.* Thou dost not *answer* me. It is *as if* my prayers were not heard. God *hears* every cry; but the answer to a prayer is sometimes withheld or delayed, as if he did not hear the voice of the suppliant. Comp. Notes on Dan. x. 12, 13. So it was with the Redeemer. He was permitted to suffer without being rescued by Divine power, *as if* his prayers had not been heard. God *seemed* to disregard his supplications. ¶ *And in the night-season.* As explained above, this means *constantly.* It was literally true, however, that the Redeemer's most intense and earnest prayer was uttered in the night-season, in the garden of Gethsemane. ¶ *And am not silent.* Marg., there is *no silence to me.* Heb., "There is not silence to me." The idea is, that he prayed or cried incessantly. He was never silent. All this denotes intense and continuous supplication, supplication that came from the deepest anguish of the soul, but which was unheard and unanswered. If Christ experienced this, who may not?

3. *But thou* art *holy.* Thou art righteous and blameless. This indicates that the sufferer had still unwavering confidence in God. Though his prayer seemed not to be heard, and though he was not delivered, he was not disposed to blame God. He believed that God was righteous, though he received no answer; he doubted not that there was some sufficient reason why he was not answered. This is applicable, not only to the Redeemer, in whom it

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

was most fully illustrated, but also to the people of God everywhere. It expresses a state of mind such as all true believers in God have—confidence in him, whatever may be their trials; confidence in him, though the answer to their prayers may be long delayed; confidence in him, though their prayers should seem to be *un*answered. Comp. Notes on Job xiii. 15. ¶ *O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* That dwellest where praise is celebrated; that seemest to dwell in the midst of praises. The language here refers to the praises offered in the tabernacle or temple. God was supposed to dwell there, and he was surrounded by those who praised him. The sufferer looks upon him as worshipped by the multitude of his people; and the feeling of his heart is, that though he was himself a sufferer—a great and apparently unpitied sufferer—though he, by his afflictions, was not permitted to unite in those lofty praises, yet he could own that God was worthy of all those songs, and that it was proper that they should be addressed to him.

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee.* This is a plea of the sufferer as drawn from the character which God had manifested in former times. The argument is, that he had interposed in those times when his people in trouble had called upon him; and he now pleads with God that he would manifest himself to *him* in the same way. The argument derives additional force also from the idea that he who now pleads was descended from them, or was of the same nation and people, and that he might call them his ancestors. As applicable to the Redeemer, the argument is that he was *descended* from those holy and suffering men who had trusted in God, and in whose behalf God had so often interposed. He identifies himself with that people; he regards himself as one of their number; and he makes mention of God's merciful interposition in their behalf, and of the fact that he had not forsaken *them* in their troubles, as a reason why he should now interpose in his behalf and save him. As applicable to others, it is an argument which the people of God may always use in their trials—that God has thus interposed in behalf of his people of former times who trusted in him, and who called upon him. God is always the same. We may strengthen our faith in our trials by the assurance that he never changes; and, in pleading with him, we may urge it as an argument that he *has* often interposed when the tried and the afflicted of his people have called upon him. ¶ *They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.* They confided in thee; they called on thee; thou didst not spurn their prayer; thou didst not forsake *them.*

5. *They cried unto thee.* They offered earnest prayer and supplication. ¶ *And were delivered.* From dangers and trials. ¶ *They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.* Were not disappointed. Literally, "they were not *ashamed.*" That is, they had not the confusion which those have who are disappointed. The idea in the word is, that when men put their trust in anything and are disappointed, they are conscious of a species of *shame* as if they had been foolish in relying on that which proved to be insufficient to help them; as if they had manifested a want of wisdom in not being more cautious, or in supposing that they could derive help from that which has proved to be fallacious. So in Jer. xiv. 3, "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters; they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; *they were ashamed and confounded,* and covered their heads." That is, they

6 But I *am* a worm, *l* and no man; a reproach of men, and despised *m* of the people.

7 All *n* they that see me laugh me to scorn: they [1] shoot out the lip, they shake *o* the head, *saying,*

8 He [2] trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let

l Isa. xli. 14. *m* Isa. liii. 3. *n* Mark xv. 29, etc.

[1] *open.* *o* Ps. cix. 25. [2] *rolled* himself.

felt as if they had acted *foolishly* or *unwisely* in expecting to find water there. Comp. Notes on Job vi. 20. In the expression here, "they trusted in thee, and were not confounded," it is meant that men who confide in God are never disappointed, or never have occasion for shame as if herein *they* had acted foolishly. They are never left to feel that they had put their trust where no help was to be found; that they had confided in one who had deceived them, or that they had reason to be ashamed of their act as an act of foolishness.

6. *But I am a worm, and no man.* In contrast with the fathers who trusted in thee. They prayed, and were heard; they confided in God, and were treated as men. I am left and forsaken, as if I were not worth regarding; as if I were a grovelling worm beneath the notice of the great God. In other words, I am treated as if I were the most insignificant, the most despicable, of all objects,—alike unworthy the attention of God or man. By the one my prayers are unheard; by the other I am cast out and despised. Comp. Job xxv. 6. As applicable to the Redeemer, this means that he was forsaken alike by God and men, as if he had no claims to the treatment due to *a man.* ¶ *A reproach of men.* Reproached by men. Comp. Isa. liii. 3, and the Notes on that verse. ¶ *Despised of the people.* That is, of the people who witnessed his sufferings. It is not necessary to say how completely this had a fulfilment in the sufferings of the Saviour.

7. *All they that see me laugh me to scorn.* They deride or mock me. On the word used here—לָעַג, *laag*—see Notes on Ps. ii. 4. The meaning here is to mock, to deride, to treat with scorn. The idea of *laughing* is not properly in the word, nor would that necessarily occur in the treatment here referred to. How completely this was fulfilled in the case of the Saviour, it is not necessary to say. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 39, "And they that passed by, reviled him." There is no evidence that this literally occurred in the life of David. ¶ *They shoot out the lip.* Marg., *open.* The Hebrew word—פָּצַר, *patar*—means properly *to split, to burst open;* then, as in this place, it means to open wide the mouth; to stretch the mouth in derision and scorn. See Ps. xxxv. 21, "They opened their mouth wide against me." Job xvi. 10, "They have gaped upon me with their mouth." ¶ *They shake the head.* In contempt and derision. See Matt. xxvii. 39, "Wagging their heads."

8. *He trusted on the* LORD that *he would deliver him.* Marg., *He rolled* himself *on the* LORD. The margin expresses the true sense of the Hebrew word. The idea is that of being under the pressure of a heavy burden, and of *rolling* it off, or casting it on another. Hence the word is often used in the sense of committing to another; entrusting anything to another; confiding in another. Ps. xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord;" Marg., as in Heb., "*Roll* thy way upon the Lord." Prov. xvi. 3, "*Commit thy works unto the Lord,*" Marg., as in Heb., "*Roll.*" The language here is the taunting language of his enemies, and the meaning is that he had professed to commit himself to the Lord as if he were his friend; he had expressed confidence in God, and he believed that his cause was safe in His hand. This, too, was actually fulfilled in the case of the Saviour. Matt. xxvii. 43: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him

him deliver *p* him, [1] seeing he delighted in him.

9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb; thou [2] didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.

[1] Or, *if he delight in him.*
p Ps. xci. 14.

[2] Or, *keptest me in safety.*

now, if he will have him." It is one of the most remarkable instances of blindness and infatuation that has ever occurred in the world, that the Jews should have used this language in taunting the dying Redeemer, without even suspecting that they were fulfilling the prophecies, and demonstrating at the very time when they were reviling him that he was the true Messiah. ¶ *Let him deliver him.* Let him come and save him. Since he professes to belong to God; since he claims that God loves him and regards him as his friend, let him come now and rescue one so dear to him. He is hopelessly abandoned by men. If God chooses to have one so abject, so despised, so forsaken, so helpless, let him come now and take him as his own. *We* will not rescue him; we will do nothing to save him, for we do not need him. If God wants him, let him come and save him. What blasphemy! What an exhibition of the dreadful depravity of the human heart was manifested in the crucifixion of the Redeemer! ¶ *Seeing he delighted in him.* Marg., *if he delight in him.* The correct rendering is, "for he delighted in him." That is, it was claimed by the sufferer that God delighted in him. If this is so, say they, let him come and rescue one so dear to himself. Let him show his friendship for this vagrant, this impostor, this despised and worthless man!

9. *But thou* art *he that took me out of the womb.* I owe my life to thee. This is urged by the sufferer as a reason why God should now interpose and protect him. God had brought him into the world, guarding him in the perils of the earliest moments of his being, and he now pleads that in the day of trouble God will interpose and save him. There is nothing improper in applying this to the Messiah. He was a man, with all the innocent propensities and feelings of a man; and no one can say but that when on the cross,—and perhaps with peculiar fitness we may say when he saw his mother standing near him (John xix. 25),—these thoughts may have passed through his mind. In the remembrance of the care bestowed on his early years, he may now have looked with an eye of earnest pleading to God, that, if it were possible, he might deliver him. ¶ *Thou didst make me hope.* Marg., *Keptest me in safety.* The phrase in the Hebrew means, Thou didst cause me to trust or to hope. It may mean here either that he was made to cherish a hope of the Divine favour *in very early life,* as it were when an infant at the breast; or it may mean that he had *cause* then to hope, or to trust in God. The former, it seems to me, is probably the meaning; and the idea is, that from his earliest years he had been led to trust in God; and he now pleads this fact as a reason why he should interpose to save him. Applied to the Redeemer as a man, it means that in his earliest childhood he had trusted in God. His first breathings were those of piety. His first aspirations were for the Divine favour. His first love was the love of God. This he now calls to remembrance; this he now urges as a reason why God should *not* withdraw the light of his countenance, and leave him to suffer alone. No one can prove that these thoughts did *not* pass through the mind of the Redeemer when he was enduring the agonies of desertion on the cross; no one can show that they would have been improper. ¶ *Upon my mother's breast.* In my earliest infancy. This does not mean that he literally cherished hope *then,* but that he had done it in the earliest period of his life, as the first act of his conscious being.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou [q] *art* my God from my mother's belly.

11 Be not far from me, for trouble *is* near; for *there is* [1] none to help.

[q] Isa. xlvi. 3; xlix. 1.
[1] *not a helper.*

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.

13 They [2] gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.

[2] *opened their mouths against me.*

10. *I was cast upon thee from the womb.* Upon thy protection and care. This, too, is an argument for the Divine interposition. He had been, as it were, thrown early in life upon the protecting care of God. In some peculiar sense he had been more unprotected and defenceless than is common at that period of life, and he owed his preservation then entirely to God. This, too, *may* have passed through the mind of the Redeemer on the cross. In those sad and desolate moments he may have recalled the scenes of his early life—the events which had occurred in regard to him in his early years; the poverty of his mother, the manger, the persecution by Herod, the flight into Egypt, the return, the safety which he then enjoyed from persecution in a distant part of the land of Palestine, in the obscure and unknown village of Nazareth. This too may have occurred to his mind as a reason why God should interpose and deliver him from the dreadful darkness which had come over him now. ¶ *Thou* art *my God from my mother's belly.* Thou hast been my God from my very childhood. He had loved God as such; he had obeyed him as such; he had trusted him as such; and he now pleads this as a reason why God should interpose for him.

11. *Be not far from me.* Do not withdraw from me; do not leave or forsake me. ¶ *For trouble is near.* Near, in the sense that deep sorrow has come upon me; near, in the sense that I am approaching a dreadful death. ¶ *For* there is *none to help.* Marg., as in Heb., *not a helper.* There were those who *would* have helped, but they could not; there were those who *could* have helped, but they would not. His friends that stood around the cross were unable to aid him; his foes were unwilling to do it; and he was left to suffer unhelped.

12. *Many bulls have compassed me.* Men with the fierceness and fury of bulls. Comp. Isa. li. 20; Ps. lxviii. 30. ¶ *Strong* bulls *of Bashan.* The country of Bashan embraced the territory which was on the east of the Jordan, north of Gilead, which was given to the half tribe of Manasseh: comp. Gen. xiv. 5 with Joshua xii. 4–6. It was distinguished as pasture land for its richness. Its trees and its breed of cattle are frequently referred to in the Scriptures. Thus in Deut. xxxii. 14, "rams of the breed of Bashan" are mentioned; in Isa. ii. 13, Zech. xi. 2, "oaks of Bashan" are mentioned in connexion with the cedars of Lebanon; in Amos iv. 1, "the kine of Bashan" are mentioned. The bulls of Bashan are here alluded to as remarkable for their size, their strength, and their fierceness; and are designed to represent men that were fierce, savage, and violent. As applied to the Redeemer, the allusion is to the fierce and cruel men that persecuted him and sought his life. No one can doubt that the allusion is applicable to his persecutors and murderers; and no one can show that the thought indicated by this phrase also may not have passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross.

13. *They gaped upon me* with *their mouths.* Marg., as in Heb., *opened their mouths against me.* That is, they opened their mouths wide as if they would devour me, as a lion does when he seizes upon his prey. In ver. 7 they are represented as "opening" the mouth for another purpose—that of derision or scorn; here they

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are [1] out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16 For dogs [r] have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked

[1] Or, *sundered.*

[r] Rev. xxii. 15.

are described as if they were fierce and wild beasts ready to fall upon their prey. ¶ As *a ravening and roaring lion.* The word *ravening* means *voraciously devouring,* and the allusion in the Hebrew word is to the lion as he *tears* his prey—טֹרֵף, *toreph*—rending it in pieces to devour it. All this is designed to denote the greediness with which the enemies of the Redeemer sought his life.

14. *I am poured out like water.* The sufferer now turns from his enemies, and describes the effect of all these outward persecutions and trials on himself. The meaning in this expression is, that all his strength was gone. It is remarkable that we have a similar expression, which is not easily accounted for, when we say of ourselves that "we are as weak as water." An expression similar to this occurs in Joshua vii. 5: "The hearts of the people melted, and became as water." Comp. Lam. ii. 19; Ps. lviii. 7. ¶ *My bones are out of joint.* Marg., *sundered.* The Hebrew word—פָּרַד, *parad*—means *to break off, to break in pieces, to separate by breaking;* and then, *to be separated,* or *divided.* It is not necessary to suppose here that his bones were *literally* dislocated or "put out of joint," any more than it is necessary to suppose that he was literally "poured out like water," or that his heart was literally "melted like wax" within him. The meaning is that he was utterly prostrated and powerless; he was *as if* his bones had been dislocated, and he was unable to use his limbs. ¶ *My heart is like wax.* The idea here also is that of debility. His strength seemed all to be gone. His heart was no longer firm; his vigour was exhausted. ¶ *It is melted in the midst of my bowels.* Or, within me. The word *bowels* in the Scriptures is not restricted in its signification as it is with us. It embraces the upper parts of the viscera as well as the lower, and consequently would include that part in which the heart is situated. See Notes on Isa. xvi. 11. The meaning here is that his heart was no longer firm and strong. As applied to the Redeemer, this would refer to the prostration of his strength in his last struggle; and no one can prove that *these* thoughts did not pass through his mind when on the cross.

15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd.* A *potsherd* is a fragment of a broken pot, or a piece of earthenware. See Notes on Isa. xlv. 9; Job ii. 8. The meaning here is, that his strength was not vigorous like a green tree that was growing, and that was full of sap, but it was like a brittle piece of earthenware, so dry and fragile that it could be easily crumbled to pieces. ¶ *And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.* See Notes on Job xxix. 10. The meaning here is, that his mouth was dry, and he could not speak. His tongue adhered to the roof of his mouth so that he could not use it,—another description of the effects of intense thirst. Comp. John xix. 28. ¶ *And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.* Or, as we should say, *to dust—to the grave*—to the dust where death reigns. See Notes on Dan. xii. 2. The meaning is, that he was near death; or, was just ready to die. Who can show that the Redeemer when on the cross may not in his own meditations have gone over these very expressions in the psalm as applicable to himself?

16. *For dogs have compassed me.* Men who resemble dogs;—harsh,

have inclosed me: they [s] pierced my hands and my feet.

[s] John xix. 23; xx. 25—27.

snarling, fierce, ferocious. See Notes on Phil. iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 15. No one can doubt that this is applicable to the Redeemer. ¶ *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me.* That is, they have surrounded me; they have come around me on all sides so that I might not escape. So they surrounded the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane when they arrested him and bound him; so they surrounded him when on his trial before the Sanhedrim and before Pilate; and so they surrounded him on the cross. ¶ *They pierced my hands and my feet.* This passage is attended with more difficulty than perhaps any other part of the psalm. It is remarkable that it is nowhere quoted or referred to in the New Testament as applicable to the Saviour; and it is no less remarkable that there is no express statement in the actual history of the crucifixion that either the hands or the feet of the Saviour were pierced, or that he was *nailed* to the cross at all. This was not *necessarily* implied in the idea of crucifixion, for the hands and the feet were sometimes merely *bound* to the cross by cords, and the sufferer was allowed to linger on the cross thus suspended until he died from mere exhaustion. There can be no doubt, however, that the common mode of crucifixion was to nail the hands to the transverse beam of the cross, and the feet to the upright part of it. See the description of the crucifixion in the Notes on Matt. xxvii. 31, 32. Thus Tertullian, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, and applying this passage to his death, says that "this was the peculiar or proper—*propria*—severity of the cross."—Adv. Marcionem, iii. 19, ed. Würtz, I. p. 403. See Hengstenberg's Christology, 1,139. The great difficulty in this passage is in the word rendered in our version, *they pierced*—כָּאֲרִי, *kaari*. It occurs only in one other place, Isa. xxxviii. 13, where it means *as a lion*. This would undoubtedly be the most natural interpretation of the *word* here, unless there were good reasons for setting it aside; and not a few have endeavoured to show that this *is* the true rendering. According to this interpretation, the passage would mean, "As lions, they [that is, my enemies] surround (gape upon) my hands and my feet; that is, they threaten to tear my limbs to pieces." *Gesenius, Lex.* This interpretation is also that of Aben Ezra, Ewald, Paulus, and others. But, whatever may be the true explanation, there are very serious objections to this one. (*a*) It is difficult to make sense of the passage if this is adopted. The preceding word, rendered in our version "inclosed," can mean only *surrounded* or *encompassed*, and it is difficult to see how it could be said that a lion could "surround" or "encompass" *the hands and the feet.* At all events, such an interpretation would be harsh and unusual. (*b*) According to this interpretation the word "*me*"—"inclosed *me*"—would be superfluous; since the idea would be, "they enclose or surround *my hands and my feet.*" (*c*) All the ancient interpreters have taken the word here to be a verb, and in all the ancient versions it is rendered as if it were a verb. Even in the *Masora parva* (Jewish) it is said that the word here is to be taken in a different sense from what it has in Isa. xxxviii. 13, where it plainly means a lion. Gesenius admits that all the ancient interpreters have taken this as a verb, and says that it is "certainly possible" that it may be so. He says that it may be regarded as a participle formed in the Chaldee manner (from כּוּר, *kur*), and in the plural number for כָּאֲרִים, *kaarim*, and says that in this way it would be properly rendered, *piercing my hands and my feet;* that is, as he says, "my enemies, who are understood in the dogs." From such high authority,

and from the uniform mode of interpreting the word among the ancients, it may be regarded as morally certain that the word is a *verb*, and that it is not to be rendered, as in Isa. xxxviii. 13, "*as a lion.*" The material question is, What does the verb mean? The verb—כָּרָה, *kur*—properly means *to dig, to bore through, to pierce.* Thus used, according to Gesenius, it would mean *piercing;* and if the word used here is a verb, he supposes that it would refer to the enemies of David as wounding him, or piercing him, "with darts and weapons." He maintains that it is applicable to David literally, and he sees no reason to refer it to the Messiah. But, if so, it is natural to ask why *the hands* and *the feet* are mentioned. Certainly it is not usual for darts and spears thrown by an enemy to injure the hands or the feet particularly; nor is it customary to refer to the hands or the feet when describing the effects produced by the use of those weapons. If the reference were to the enemies of David as wounding him with darts and spears, it would be much more natural to refer to the *body* in general, without specifying any of the particular members of the body. De Wette renders it *fesseln*—"they *bind* my hands and my feet." He remarks, however, in a note, that according to the ancient versions, and the Codices of Kennicott and De Rossi, it means *durchbohren*—bore through. Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome in five codices, says he, render it *bind.* The Septuagint renders it ὤρυξαν—they *pierced.* The Latin Vulgate the same, *foderunt.* See the Syriac. For these reasons it seems to me that the common rendering is the true one, and that the meaning is, that, in some proper sense, the enemies here referred to "pierced or bored through" the hands and the feet of the sufferer. Evidently this could *not* be literally applied to David, for there is not the least authority for supposing that this ever happened to him; nor, as has been shown, was such a thing probable. A casual dart, or the stroke of a spear, *might* indeed strike the hand or the foot; but it would be unusual and remarkable if they should strike those members of the body and leave the other parts uninjured, so as to make this a matter for special notice; and even *if* they did strike those parts, it would be every way unlikely that they would *pierce them,* or *bore* them *through.* Such an event would be so improbable that we may assume that it did *not* occur, unless there was the most decisive evidence of the fact. Nor is there the least probability that the enemies of David would pierce his hands and feet deliberately and of design. I say nothing in regard to the fact that they never had him in their possession so that they *could* do it; it is sufficient to say that this was not a mode of punishing one who was taken captive in war. Conquerors slew their captives; they made them pass under yokes; they put them under saws and harrows of iron (comp. 2 Sam. xii. 31; 1 Chron. xx. 3); but there is not the slightest evidence that they ever tortured captives in war by piercing the hands and the feet. But, as has been remarked above, there is every reason to believe that this was the ordinary mode of crucifixion. I conclude, therefore, that this must have had original reference to the Messiah. It is no objection to the interpretation that this passage is not expressly referred to as having been fulfilled in the Redeemer; for there are undoubtedly many passages in the prophets which refer to the Messiah, which are not formally applied to him in the New Testament. To make it certain that the prophecy referred to him, and was fulfilled in him, it is not necessary that we should find on record an actual application of the passage to him. All that is necessary in the case is, that it should *be* a prophecy; that it should have been spoken before the event; and that to him it should be fairly applicable.

17 I [t] may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.

[t] Isa. lii. 14.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

17. *I may tell all my bones.* That is, I may count them. They are so prominent, so bare, that I can see them and count their number. The idea here is that of emaciation from continued suffering or from some other cause. As applied to the Redeemer, it would denote the effect of long protracted suffering and anxiety on his frame, as rendering it crushed, weakened, emaciated. Comp. Notes on Isa. lii. 14; liii. 2, 3. No one can prove that an effect such as is here referred to may not have been produced by the sufferings of the Redeemer. ¶ *They look* and *stare upon me.* That is, either my bones,—or, my enemies that stand around me. The most obvious construction would refer it to the former,—to his bones,—*as if* they stood out prominently and stared him in the face. Rosenmüller understands it in the latter sense, as meaning that his enemies gazed with wonder on such an object. Perhaps this, on the whole, furnishes the best interpretation, as there is something unnatural in speaking of a man's own bones staring or gazing upon him, and as the image of his enemies standing and looking with wonder on one so wretched, so crushed, so broken, is a very striking one. This, too, will better agree with the statement in Isa. lii. 14, "Many were astonished at thee;" and Isa. liii. 2, 3, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;"—"we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." It accords also better with the statement in the following verse; "*they*," that is, the same persons referred to, "part my garments among them."

18. *They part my garments among them.* They divide; they apportion. This refers merely to the *fact* that they made such a division or distribution of his garments; the *manner* in which it was done, is specified in the other part of the verse. The word *garments* is a general term, and would be applicable to any part of the raiment. ¶ *And cast lots upon my vesture.* That is, upon the part here represented by the word *vesture*, they *cast lots.* There was a general division of his garments by agreement, or in some other mode not involving the use of the *lot;* on some particular portion, here indicated by the word *vesture*, the lot was cast to determine whose it should be. The word thus rendered *vesture*—לְבוּשִׁי, *lebush*—does not necessarily denote any particular article of raiment, as distinguished from what is meant by the word rendered *garments.* Both are general terms denoting clothing, raiment, vestment; and either of the terms might be applied to any article of apparel. The original words used here would not *necessarily* designate one article of raiment as disposed of without the lot and another specified portion by the lot. But although it could not be argued beforehand from the mere use of the language that such would be the case, yet if that should occur, it would be natural and not improper to apply the language in that sense, and as therein completely fulfilled. As a matter of fact this was literally fulfilled in the crucifixion of the Saviour. By remarkable circumstances which no human sagacity could have foreseen or anticipated, there occurred a general division of a portion of his raiment, without an appeal to the lot, among the soldiers who were engaged in crucifying him, and a specific disposal of *one* article of his raiment by the lot, Matt. xxvii. 35; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 23, 24. It never occurred in the life of David, as far as we know, or have reason to believe, that his enemies stripped him, and divided his garments among themselves; and the description here, therefore, could be

19 But be not thou far from me,
O LORD: O my strength, haste
thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the
sword; my [1] darling from the
[2] power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's

[1] *only one.* [2] *hand.*

applicable only to some one else. It was completely fulfilled in the Saviour; and this verse, therefore, furnishes the fullest proof that the psalm refers to him. At the same time it should be observed that these circumstances are such that an impostor could not have secured the correspondence of the events with the prediction. The events referred to were not under the control of him whose garments were thus divided. They depended wholly on others; and by no art or plan could an impostor have so arranged matters that all these things should have appeared to be fulfilled in himself.

19. *But be not thou far from me, O* LORD. O JEHOVAH. Others—all others—have forsaken me, and left me to perish. Now, in the day of my desertion and my peril, be thou near to me. See ver. 11. This is the burden of the prayer in the whole psalm, that God would not leave him, but sustain and deliver him. Comp. ver. 1. ¶ *O my strength.* Source of my strength; thou on whom I rely for support and deliverance. ¶ *Haste thee to help me.* Help me speedily. Come to support me; come to deliver me from these dreadful sorrows. This is not necessarily a prayer to be rescued from *death*, but it would be applicable to deliverance from those deep mental sorrows that had come upon him—from this abandonment to unutterable woes.

20. *Deliver my soul from the sword.* The word *soul* here means *life*, and denotes a living person. It is equivalent to "deliver *me.*" The *sword* is used to denote an instrument of death, or anything that pierces like a sword. Comp. 2 Sam. xi. 24, 25. As applied to the Saviour here, it may mean those extreme mental sufferings that were like the piercing of a sword. ¶ *My darling.* Marg., *my only one.* Prof. Alexander, *my lonely one.* De Wette, *my life.* The Hebrew word—יְחִידָתִי, *yahhid*—means *one alone, only,* as of an only child;—then one alone, as forsaken, solitary, wretched, Ps. xxv. 16; lxviii. 6;—then it means one only, *the* only one, in the sense of *most dear, darling.* Here, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), it is used poetically for *life*, as being something most dear, or as denoting all that we have, and, therefore, most precious. Comp. Job ii. 4. This is the most probable interpretation here, as it would thus correspond with the expression in the first part of the verse, "deliver my *soul.*" ¶ *From the power of the dog.* Marg., as in Heb., *from the hand.* The enemy is represented, as in ver. 16, as a *dog* (see Notes on that verse); and then that enemy is spoken of as inflicting death by his hand. There is a little incongruity in speaking of a *dog* as having hands, but the image before the mind is that of the enemy with the *character* of a dog, and thus there is no impropriety in using in reference to him the language which is commonly applied to a man.

21. *Save me from the lion's mouth.* His enemies represented as fierce and ravening lions, comp. ver. 13. ¶ *For thou hast heard me.* The word *heard* in this place is equivalent to *saved*—or saved in answer to prayer. The fact of *hearing* the prayer, and *answering* it, is regarded as so identical, or the one as so certainly following from the other, that they may be spoken of as the same thing. ¶ *From the horns of the unicorns.* The idea here is, that he cried to God when exposed to what is here called "the horns of the unicorns." That is, when surrounded by enemies as fierce and violent as wild beasts,—as if he were among "unicorns" seeking his life,—he had called upon God, and God had heard him. This would refer to some

" mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the [v] unicorns.

22 I [w] will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst

[u] 2 Tim. iv. 17. [v] Isa. xxxiv. 7.
[w] Ps. xl. 9; Heb. ii. 11, 12.

of the congregation will I praise thee.

23 Ye [x] that fear the LORD, praise him: all ye the seed of

[x] Ps. cxv. 11, 13.

former period of his life, when surrounded by dangers, or exposed to the attacks of wicked men, and when he had called upon God, and had been heard. There were not a few occasions alike in the life of David and in the life of the Saviour, to which this would be applicable. The fact that he *had* thus been delivered from danger, is now urged as an argument why God was to be regarded as able to deliver him again, and why the prayer might be offered that he would do it; comp. vers. 9–11. To see the force of this it is not necessary to be able to determine with accuracy what is meant here by the word rendered *unicorn*, or whether the psalmist referred to the animal now denoted by that term. The existence of such an animal was long regarded as fabulous; but though it has been proved that there *is* such an animal, it is not *necessary* to suppose that the psalmist referred to it. Gesenius renders the word—רְאֵם, *reem*—*buffalo* (*Lex.*). So also De Wette. See Notes on Job xxxix. 9, 10, where the meaning of the word is fully considered. The word occurs elsewhere only in Numb. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Ps. xxix. 6; xcii. 10; Isa. xxxiv. 7, in all which places it is rendered *unicorn*, or *unicorns*.

22. *I will declare thy name.* I will make thee known; that is, thine existence; thy perfections; thy law; thy method of salvation. As the result or effect of the interposition which he desired, and for which he prayed, he says that he would diffuse a knowledge of God. This is an expression of true piety, and is a statement of what in a pure mind will always be consequent on a gracious Divine interposition,—a purpose to make the character of the benefactor known. Comp. Ps. li. 12, 13; xviii. 48, 49. As applicable to the Redeemer, it means that he would make the name of God known to men, or that *through him* that name would be made known. ¶ *Unto my brethren.* Comp. John xx. 17; Rom. viii. 29. The word *brethren* would embrace literally brothers; kinsfolk; countrymen; then, those of the same opinion, profession, or religion; then, in a still larger sense, the human race as descended from a common parent. As having reference to the Redeemer, it would embrace here not only those who were his immediate followers and whom he called brethren,—not only those of his own nation,—but the human family in general, towards whom he consented to sustain this relation. Comp. Notes on Heb. ii. 10—12, where this passage is quoted and expressly applied to our Saviour. ¶ *In the midst of the congregation.* Among the people assembled to worship there. See Notes on Heb. ii. 12. This is the place where praise is commonly celebrated, and he says that *there* he would make known the goodness of God. Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 19, 20. It is not necessary to show that this was *literally* done by the Redeemer. It is enough to observe that this is the usual language of piety, and that the effect of his work has been to cause the praises of God to be celebrated in tens of thousands of the congregations of his saints.

23. *Ye that fear the* LORD. A phrase denoting those who are pious. ¶ *Praise him.* This is language which may be supposed to be addressed by the speaker in the great congregation. In the previous verse he had said that he *would* praise God " in the midst of the congregation;" he here speaks *as if* he *were* in that congregation, and addressing them. He, therefore, calls on them to praise

Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he [y] cried unto him, he heard.

[y] Heb. v. 7. [z] Ps. lxvi. 13—16.

25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: [z] I [a] will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26 The meek [b] shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the

[a] Ps. cxvi. 14; Eccles. v. 4, 5.
[b] Matt. v. 5.

and honour God. ¶ *All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him.* The descendants of Jacob; that is, all who are true worshippers of God. ¶ *And fear him.* Honour him, worship him. See Notes on Ps. v. 7. ¶ *All ye the seed of Israel.* Another name for Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 28), and designed to denote also all who are true worshippers of Jehovah.

24. *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.* This expresses the belief that his prayer had been heard. The fact that he had been thus heard is here assigned to be the ground or reason for the exhortation in the previous verse, addressed to all the pious. The Lord had heard *his* prayer, and this was a reason why others should also confide in the Lord, and feel assured that he would likewise hear their prayers. ¶ *Neither hath he hid his face from him.* That is, *permanently, constantly, finally, completely.* He has not wholly abandoned me, but though he seemed to forsake me, it was for a time only; and his friendship has not been ultimately and for ever withdrawn. It was indeed the foundation of all the petitions in this psalm that the Lord *had* hid his face from the sufferer (ver. 1); but, from this verse, it seems that it was only for a time. That which he passed through was a temporary darkness, succeeded by the clear manifestations of the Divine favour. The Lord heard his prayer; the Lord showed that he had not utterly forsaken him. ¶ *But when he cried unto him, he heard.* Showing that now he had the evidence and the assurance that his prayer *had* been heard. As applicable to the Redeemer on the cross, this means that though the darkness seemed to continue till death, yet it was not an utter forsaking. His prayer was heard; his work was accepted; the great object for which he came into the world would be accomplished; he himself would rise triumphantly from his sufferings; and the cause which he came to establish, and for which he died, would finally prevail in the world. Comp. Heb. v. 7, 8; John xi. 42; Isa. liii. 11, 12.

25. *My praise* shall be *of thee.* That is, I will praise thee. I will call to remembrance thy goodness, and will unite with others in celebrating thy faithfulness and loving-kindness. ¶ *In the great congregation.* See Notes on ver. 22. ¶ *I will pay my vows before them that fear him.* In the presence of his worshippers. That is, he would keep the vows which in his afflictions he had made, that he would praise and serve God. These vows or promises were of the nature of a *debt* which he says he would remember to pay. Of the Redeemer, this need not be understood personally, but it means that as the result of his prayer having been heard, the worship of God would be celebrated by those who feared him. The solemn worship of the people of God —the praises which *they* offer to the Most High—may be regarded as worship paid by the Redeemer himself, for he does it *in* the persons and services of those whom he redeemed. All the praises which proceed from their hearts and lips are the fruit of his "vows," of his fidelity, and his prayers.

26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied.* The word *meek*—עֲנָוִים *anavim*—means here rather *afflicted*,

LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S, and he *is* the governor among the nations.

29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none

distressed, miserable. This is its usual meaning. It is employed sometimes in the sense of *mild* or *meek* (comp. Num. xii. 3); but it here manifestly denotes the afflicted; the poor; the distressed. When it is said that they would "eat and be satisfied," the idea is that of prosperity or abundance; and the statement is, that, as the result of the Redeemer's work, blessings in abundance would be imparted to the poor and the distressed—those who had been destitute, forsaken, and friendless. ¶ *They shall praise the* LORD *that seek him.* Those that worship God, or the pious, shall see abundant cause to praise God. They will not merely call upon him by earnest prayer, but they will render him thanks for his mercies. ¶ *Your heart shall live for ever.* The hearts of those that worship God. Their hearts would not faint or be discouraged. They would exult and rejoice continually. In other words, their joy and their praise would never die away.

27. *All the ends of the world.* All parts of the earth; all nations. The earth is frequently represented in the Scriptures as having limits or boundaries; as spread out; as having corners, etc. Comp. Isa. xi. 12; Jer. ix. 26; xxv. 23; xlix. 32; Rev. vii. 1. This language is in accordance with the prevailing modes of thinking, in the same way as we say, "the sun rises;" "the sun sets," etc. ¶ *Shall remember.* The nations are often represented as *forgetting* God; that is, they act as if they had once known him, and had then forgotten him. See Job viii. 13; Ps. ix. 17; l. 22; Rom. i. 21. Here it is said that they would again call God to remembrance; that is, they would worship him as the true God. ¶ *And turn unto the* LORD. Turn away from their idols to worship the living God. ¶ *And all the kindreds of the nations.* All the *families.* The numerous families upon the earth that constitute the one great family of mankind. ¶ *Shall worship before thee.* Shall worship in thy presence; that is, shall worship thee. The language is derived from the act of worshipping God in the tabernacle or the temple, before the visible symbol of his presence there. As applicable to the Redeemer, this language is in accordance with what is uniformly said of him and his work, that the world would be converted to the living and true God. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 8.

28. *For the kingdom* is *the* LORD'S. The dominion belongs of right to Jehovah, the true God. See Matt. vi. 13; Ps. xlvii. 7, 8. ¶ *And he* is *the governor among the nations.* He is the rightful governor or ruler among the nations. This is an assertion of the absolute *right* of Jehovah to reign over the nations of the earth, and the expression of an assurance on the part of the Messiah that, as the consequence of his work, this empire of Jehovah over the nations would be actually established. Comp. Notes on Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27; and on 1 Cor. xv. 24–28.

29. *All* they that be *fat upon the earth.* The general meaning of this verse is, that *all classes of persons* will come and worship the true God;—not the poor and needy only, the afflicted, and the oppressed, but the rich and the prosperous. There are *three* classes mentioned as representing all:—(1) the rich and prosperous; (2) they who bow down to the dust, or

can keep alive his own soul.

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness [c] unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

[c] Rom. iii. 21—26.

the crushed and the oppressed; (3) those who are approaching the grave, and have no power to keep themselves alive. The first class comprises those who are mentioned here as being *fat*. This image is often used to denote prosperity: Judg. iii. 29; Job xv. 27; Ps. xvii. 10; lxxiii. 4 (Heb.); Deut. xxxi. 20; xxxii. 15. The meaning is, that the rich, the great, the prosperous would be among the multitudes who would be converted to the living God. ¶ *Shall eat and worship.* This expression is derived from the custom of offering sacrifices, and of feasting upon portions of the animal that was slain. In accordance with this, the blessings of salvation are often represented as a *feast* to which all are invited. See Notes on Isa. xxv. 6. Comp. Luke xiv. 16. ¶ *All they that go down to the dust.* All those descending to the dust. Those who are bowed down to the dust; who are crushed, broken, and oppressed;—the poor, the sad, the sorrowful. Salvation is for them, as well as for the rich and the great. ¶ *Shall bow before him.* Shall worship before the true God. ¶ *And none can keep alive his own soul.* Or rather, and he who cannot keep his soul (that is, himself) alive. So the Hebrew properly means, and this accords better with the connexion. The class here represented is composed of those who are ready to perish, who are about to die,—the aged—the infirm—the sick—the dying. These, thus helpless, feeble, and sad, shall also become interested in the great plan of salvation, and shall turn unto the Lord. These classes would represent *all* the dwellers on the earth; and the affirmation is equivalent to a statement that men of all classes would be converted, and would partake of the blessings of salvation.

30. *A seed shall serve him.* A people; a race. The word used here, and rendered *seed*—זֶרַע, *zera*—means properly *a sowing;* then, a planting, a plantation; then, seed sown—of plants, trees, or grain; and then, a generation of men,—children, offspring, posterity: Gen. iii. 15; xiii. 16; xv. 5, 13; *et al.* Hence it means a race, stock, or family. It is used here as denoting those who belong to the family of God; his children. Comp. Isa. vi. 13; lxv. 9, 23. The meaning here is, that, as the result of the work performed by the sufferer, many would be brought to serve God. ¶ *It.* To wit, the seed mentioned; the people referred to. ¶ *Shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.* The word here rendered *Lord* is not *Jehovah*, but *Adonai*,—a word which is often used as a name of God,—and should not be printed here in small capitals. Prof. Alexander renders this, it seems to me improperly, "It shall be related of the Lord to the next generation." So De Wette and Hengstenberg. But the common rendering appears to me to furnish a better signification, and to be more in accordance with the meaning of the original. According to this the idea is, that the seed—the people referred to—would be reckoned to the Lord as a generation of his own people, a race, a tribe, a family pertaining to *him*. They would be regarded as such by him; they would be so estimated by mankind. They would not be a generation of aliens and strangers, but a generation of his people and friends. Comp. Ps. lxxxvii. 6.

31. *They shall come.* That is, there were those who would thus come. *Who* these would be is not specified. The obvious sense is, that some *would* rise up to do this; that the succession of such men would be kept up from age to age, making known these great facts and truths to succeeding

generations. The *language* would be applicable to a class of men called, from age to age, to proclaim these truths, and set apart to this work. It is a *fair* application of the verse to refer it to those who have been actually designated for such an office,—the ministers of religion appointed to keep up the memory of the great work of redemption in the world. Thus understood, the passage is a proper carrying out of the great truths stated in the psalm—that, in virtue of the sufferings of the Redeemer, God would be made known to men; that his worship would be kept up in the earth; that distant generations would serve him. ¶ *And shall declare his righteousness.* No language could better describe the actual office of the ministers of the Gospel as appointed to set forth the "righteousness" of God, to vindicate his government and laws, and to state the way in which men may be made righteous, or may be justified. Comp. Rom. i. 17; iii. 26. ¶ *Unto a people that shall be born.* To future generations. ¶ *That he hath done* this. That God has done or accomplished what is stated in this psalm; that is, on the supposition that it refers to the Messiah, that he has caused an atonement to be made for mankind, or that redemption has been provided through the sufferings of the Messiah.

I have given what seems to me to be a fair exposition of this psalm, referring it wholly to the Messiah. No part of the interpretation, on this view of the psalm, seems to me to be forced or unnatural, and as thus interpreted it seems to me to have as fair and obvious an applicability to him as even the liii. chapter of Isaiah, or any other portion of the prophecies. The *scene* in the psalm is the *cross*, the Redeemer suffering for the sins of man. The main features of the psalm relate to the course of thoughts which then passed through the mind of the Redeemer; his sorrow at the idea of being abandoned by God; his confidence in God; the remembrance of his early hopes; his emotions at the taunts and revilings of his enemies; his consciousness of prostrated strength; his feelings as the soldiers pierced his hands and his feet, and as they proceeded to divide his raiment; his prayer that his enemies might not be suffered to accomplish their design, or to defeat the work of redemption; his purpose to make God known to men; his assurance that the effect of his sufferings would be to bring the dwellers on the earth to serve God, and to make his name and his righteousness known to far distant times. I regard the whole psalm, therefore, as applicable to the Messiah alone; and believing it to be inspired, I cannot but feel that we have here a most interesting and affecting account, given long before it occurred, *of what actually passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross,*—an account more full than we have anywhere else in the Bible. Other statements pertain more particularly to the *external* events of the crucifixion; here we have a record in anticipation of what actually passed through *his own mind* in those hours of unspeakable anguish when he made an atonement for the sins of the world.

PSALM XXIII.

This psalm is asserted in the title to have been composed by David, and there is nothing in its contents contrary to this supposition, as there is nothing in it that would lead us necessarily to ascribe it to him. The contents of the psalm indeed correspond with the facts of his history, and with the recollections of his early life as a shepherd; but it is such as might have been composed by any one who *had* been, and in fact by any one though he had *not* been, a shepherd, as the images in it are such as are common in all poetry. Still, there is nothing to lead us to doubt that it was written by David.

It is wholly uncertain on what occasion the psalm was composed, as there are in the psalm no historical references, no indications of time, and no allusions to any circumstances in the life of the author. It is impossible even to determine whether it was composed in a time of prosperity or adversity; whether

PSALM XXIII.

A Psalm of David.

THE LORD *is* my [d] shepherd; I shall not [e] want.

[d] Isa. xl. 11; John x. 11, 14.
[e] Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

when the author was persecuted, or when he was prosperous and triumphant. The only *apparent* allusion to any circumstance of the poet's life is in ver. 6, where he says, as the crowning joy which he anticipated, that he would "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever,"—from which it has been inferred by some that he was then in exile. But this allusion is of too general a character to justify this inference with certainty. Such a hope might be expressed by any one in any circumstances, as the highest desire of a pious heart. Kimchi supposes that the psalm was composed by David in the wilderness of Hareth (1 Sam. xxii. 5); and that it pertained to the people of Israel, and to their return from exile. But this is mere conjecture. The Chaldee Paraphrase applies the psalm to the Hebrew people when delivered from captivity and exile, as a song of triumph on their return to their own land. Rüdinger, and J. D. Michaelis, suppose that it refers to the time when David had obtained a complete victory over all his enemies—when the rebellion of Absalom was quelled, and when he was seated quietly on his throne. Probably if we are to attempt to fix a time, it was at that period of his life—an advanced period—when the recollection of the merciful interposition of God in his behalf so often manifested, would suggest the brightest image of his earlier years, the watchful care which he as a shepherd had extended over his own flock—a care which God had now extended over him in the perils of his own life. Still, all this is no more than conjecture.

The psalm has always been regarded as one of exquisite beauty. The main subject is the watchful care which God had extended over the author, and the consequent assurance which he felt that God would still watch over him, and supply all his need. The *leading thought*—the essential idea—is, his full belief that God would provide for him, and that he would never be left to want. This is the thought with which the psalm commences: "The Lord is my shepherd; *I shall not want*:" and this thought is carried through the psalm. It is illustrated by two facts or images: (*a*) That God was his shepherd; that he had always manifested towards him the care which a shepherd takes of his flock, vers. 1-3; and (*b*) That he had prepared a table before him in the very presence of his enemies, or that he had abundantly provided for him in their very sight, and when they were endeavouring to destroy him,—thus giving him the assurance that he never would leave him, ver. 5.

The psalm, therefore, may be regarded as consisting of two main parts:

I. The general subject of the psalm—the confidence of the author in God—the assurance that he would always so provide for him that he would not want, ver. 1.

II. The grounds or reasons for this confidence, vers. 2-6. These are twofold:

(1.) An argument derived from the care of God over him as a shepherd, vers. 2-4.

(*a*) The statement of the fact, vers. 2, 3,

(*b*) The argument, ver. 4. From his experience of the Divine care in the past, he says that he would not be afraid even to descend into the valley of death.

(2.) An argument derived from the fact that God had provided for him in the very presence of his enemies, vers. 5, 6.

(*a*) The statement of the fact; or a reference to his life, during which God had shown the same care and goodness *as if* He had spread a table for him even in the sight of his enemies, ver. 5.

(*b*) The confident assurance, derived from that fact, that God *would* follow him with goodness and mercy all the days of his life; that his future course would be *as if* he were always to dwell in the house of the Lord, ver. 6.

1. *The* LORD is *my shepherd.* Comp. Gen. xlix. 24, "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel;" Ps. lxxx. 1, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." See also Notes on John x. 1—14. The comparison of the care which God extends over his people to that of a shepherd for his flock is one that would naturally occur to

2 He maketh me to lie down in [1] green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still [2] waters.

[1] *pastures of tender grass.*

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

[2] *waters of quietness.*

those who were accustomed to pastoral life. It would be natural that it should suggest itself to Jacob (Gen. xlix. 24), and to David, for both of them had been shepherds. David, in advanced years, would naturally remember the occupations of his early life; and the remembrance of the care of God over him would naturally recall the care which he had, in earlier years, extended over his flocks. The *idea* which the language suggests is that of tender care; protection; particular attention to the young and the feeble (comp. Isa. xl. 11); and providing for their wants. All these things are found eminently in God in reference to his people. ¶ *I shall not want.* This is the main idea in the psalm, and this idea is derived from the fact that God is a shepherd. The meaning is, that, as a shepherd, he would make all needful provision for his flock, and evince all proper care for it. The words *shall not want*, as applied to the psalmist, would embrace everything that could be a proper object of desire, whether temporal or spiritual; whether pertaining to the body or the soul; whether having reference to time or to eternity. There is no reason for supposing that David limited this to his temporal necessities, or to the present life, but the idea manifestly is that God would provide *all* that was needful for him always. Comp. Ps. xxxiv. 9, "There is no want to them that fear him." This idea enters essentially into the conception of God as the shepherd of his people, that *all* their real wants shall be supplied.

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* Marg., *pastures of tender grass.* The Hebrew word rendered *pastures* means usually *dwellings*, or *habitations.* It is applied here properly to *pastures*, as places where flocks and herds lie down for repose. The word rendered in the margin *tender grass*—דֶּשֶׁא, *deshe*—refers to the first shoots of vegetation from the earth—young herbage—tender grass—as clothing the meadows, and as delicate food for cattle, Job vi. 5. It differs from ripe grass ready for mowing, which is expressed by a different word—חָצִיר, *hhatzir.* The idea is that of calmness and repose, as suggested by the image of flocks *lying down on the grass.* But this is not the only idea. It is that of flocks that lie down on the grass *fully fed* or *satisfied*,—their wants being completely supplied. The exact point of contemplation in the mind of the poet, I apprehend, is that of a flock in young and luxuriant grass, surrounded by abundance, and, having satisfied their wants, lying down amidst this luxuriance with calm contentment. It is not merely a flock enjoying repose; it is a flock whose wants are supplied, lying down in the midst of abundance. Applied to the psalmist himself, or to the people of God generally, the idea is, that the wants of the soul are met and satisfied, and that, in the full enjoyment of this, there is the conviction of abundance,—the repose of the soul at present satisfied, and feeling that in such abundance want will be always unknown. ¶ *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* Marg., *waters of quietness.* Not stagnant waters, but waters not tempestuous and stormy; waters so calm, gentle, and still, as to suggest the idea of repose, and such as prompt to repose. As applied to the people of God, this denotes the calmness—the peace—the repose of the soul, when salvation flows as in a gently running stream; when there is no apprehension of want; when the heart is at peace with God.

3. *He restoreth my soul.* Literally, "He causes my life to return." De

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *f* *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

f Isa. xliii. 2.

Wette, "He quickens me," or causes me to live. The word *soul* here means life, or spirit, and not the soul in the strict sense in which the term is now used. It refers to the spirit when exhausted, weary, or sad; and the meaning is, that God quickens or vivifies the spirit when thus exhausted. The reference is not to the soul as wandering or backsliding from God, but to the life or spirit as exhausted, wearied, troubled, anxious, worn down with care and toil. The heart, thus exhausted, he re-animates. He brings back its vigour. He encourages it; excites it to new effort; fills it with new joy. ¶ *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.* In right paths, or right ways. He conducts me in the straight path that leads to himself; he does not suffer me to wander in ways that would lead to ruin. In reference to his people it is true (*a*) that he leads them in the path by which they *become* righteous, or by which they are *justified* before him; and (*b*) that he leads them in the way of *uprightness* and *truth*. He guides them in the way to heaven; his constant care is evinced that they *may* walk in that path. ¶ *For his name's sake.* For his own sake; or, that his name may be honoured. It is not primarily on their account; it is not solely that they may be saved. It is that he may be honoured (*a*) in their being saved at all; (*b*) in the manner in which it is done; (*c*) in the influence of their whole life, under his guidance, as making known his own character and perfections. Comp. Isa. xliii. 25; xlviii. 9; lxvi. 5; Jer. xiv. 7. The feeling expressed in this verse is that of confidence in God; an assurance that he would always lead his people in the path in which they should go. Comp. Ps. xxv. 9. This he will always do if men will follow the directions of his word, the teachings of his Spirit, and the guidance of his providence. None that thus submit to him ever go astray.

4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* The meaning of this in the connexion in which it occurs is this:—"God will lead and guide me in the path of righteousness, even though that path lies through the darkest and most gloomy vale—through deep and dismal shades—in regions where there is no light, as if death had cast his dark and baleful shadow there. It is still a right path; it is a path of safety; and it will conduct me to bright regions beyond. In that dark and gloomy valley, though I could not guide myself, I will not be alarmed; I will not be afraid of wandering or of being lost; I will not fear any enemies there,—for my Shepherd is there to guide me still." On the word here rendered *shadow of death*—צַלְמָוֶת, *tzalmaveth*—see Notes on Job iii. 5; Isa. ix. 2. The word occurs besides only in the following places, in all of which it is rendered *shadow of death:* Job x. 21, 22; xii. 22; xvi. 16; xxiv. 17 (twice); xxviii. 3; xxxiv. 22; xxxviii. 17; Ps. xliv. 19; cvii. 10, 14; Jer. ii. 6; xiii. 16; Amos v. 8. The idea is that of death casting his gloomy shadow over that valley—the valley of the dead. Hence the word is applicable to any path of gloom or sadness; any scene of trouble or sorrow; any dark and dangerous way. Thus understood, it is applicable not merely to death itself—though it embraces that—but to any or all the dark, the dangerous, and the gloomy paths which we tread in life: to ways of sadness, solitude, and sorrow. All along those paths God will be a safe and certain guide. ¶ *I will fear no evil.* Dark, cheerless, dismal as it seems, I will dread nothing. The true friend of God *has* nothing to fear in that dark valley. His great Shepherd will accompany him there, and can lead him safely through,

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou [1] anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

[1] *makest fat.*

however dark it may appear. The true believer has nothing to fear in the most gloomy scenes of life; he has nothing to fear in the valley of death; he has nothing to fear in the grave; he has nothing to fear in the world beyond. ¶ *For thou* art *with me.* Thou wilt be with me. Though invisible, thou wilt attend me. I shall not go alone; I shall not be alone. The psalmist felt assured that if God was with him he had nothing to dread there. God would be his companion, his comforter, his protector, his guide. How applicable is this to death! The dying man *seems* to go into the dark valley alone. His friends accompany him as far as they can, and then they must give him the parting hand. They cheer him with their voice until he becomes deaf to all sounds; they cheer him with their looks until his eye becomes dim, and he can see no more; they cheer him with the fond embrace until he becomes insensible to every expression of earthly affection, and then he seems to be alone. But the dying believer is *not* alone. His Saviour God is with him in that valley, and will never leave him. On his arm he can lean, and by his presence he will be comforted, until he emerges from the gloom into the bright world beyond. All that is needful to dissipate the terrors of the valley of death is to be able to say, "Thou art with me." ¶ *Thy rod and thy staff.* It may not be easy to mark the difference between these two words; but they would seem probably to refer, the latter to the *staff* which the shepherd used in walking, and the former to the *crook* which a shepherd used for guiding his flock. The image is that of a shepherd in attendance on his flock, with a staff on which he leans with one hand; in the other hand the *crook* or rod which was the symbol of his office. Either of these also might be used to guard the flock, or to drive off the enemies of the flock. The *crook* is said (see Rosenmüller, *in loc.*) to have been used to seize the legs of the sheep or goats when they were disposed to run away, and thus to keep them with the flock. "The shepherd invariably carries a rod or staff with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. With it also he corrects them when disobedient, and brings them back when wandering." (The Land and the Book, vol. i., p. 305.) ¶ *They comfort me.* The sight of them consoles me. They show that the Shepherd is there. As significant of his presence and his office, they impart confidence, showing that he will not leave me alone, and that he will defend me.

5. *Thou preparest a table.* The image is now changed, though expressing the general idea which is indicated in the first verse of the psalm, "I shall not want." The evidence or proof of this in the previous verses is, that God was a shepherd, and would provide for him as a shepherd does for his flock; the evidence here is that God had provided a table, or a feast, for him in the very presence of his enemies, and had filled his cup with joy. The word *table* here is synonymous with *feast;* and the meaning is, "thou providest for my wants." There *may* be an allusion here to some particular period of the life of the psalmist, when he was in want, and when he perhaps felt an apprehension that he would perish, and when God had unexpectedly provided for his wants; but it is impossible now to determine to what occasion he thus refers. There were numerous occasions in the life of

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD [1] for ever.

[1] *to length of days.*

David which would be well represented by this language, *as if* God had provided a meal for him in the very *presence* of his foes, and in *spite* of them. ¶ *Before me.* For me. It is spread in my presence, and *for* me. ¶ *In the presence of mine enemies.* That is, in spite of them, or so that they could not prevent it. They were compelled to look on and see how God provided for him. It was manifest that this was from God; it was a proof of the Divine favour; it furnished an assurance that he who had done this would never leave him to want. The friends of God are made to triumph in the very presence of their foes. Their enemies are compelled to see how he interposes in their behalf, how he provides for them, and how he defends them. Their final triumph in the day of judgment will be in the very presence of all their assembled enemies, for in their very presence he will pronounce the sentence which will make their eternal happiness sure, Matt. xxv. 31—36. ¶ *Thou anointest my head with oil.* Marg., as in Heb., *makest fat.* That is, thou dost pour oil on my head so abundantly that it seems to be made fat with it. The expression indicates abundance. The allusion is to the custom of anointing the head on festival occasions, as an indication of prosperity and rejoicing (see Notes on Matt. vi. 17; Luke vii. 46), and the whole is indicative of the Divine favour, of prosperity, and of joy. ¶ *My cup runneth over.* It is not merely *full*; it runs over. This, too, indicates abundance; and from the abundance of the favours thus bestowed, the psalmist infers that God would always provide for him, and that he would never leave him to want.

6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.* God will bestow them upon me. This is the *result* of what is stated in the previous verses. The effect of God's merciful dealings with him had been to lead his mind to the assurance that God would always be his shepherd and friend; that he would never leave him to want. ¶ *All the days of my life.* Through all its changes; in every variety of situation; until I reach its close. Life indeed would end, and he does not venture to conjecture when that would be; but as long as life should continue, he felt confidently assured that everything needful for him would be bestowed upon him. The language is the utterance of a heart overflowing with joy and gratitude in the recollection of the past, and full of glad anticipation (as derived from the experience of the past) in regard to the future. ¶ *And I will dwell in the house of the* LORD *for ever.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *to length of days.* The expression, I think, does not refer to eternity or to heaven, but it is parallel with the former expression "All the days of my life;" that is, he would dwell in the house of the Lord as long as he lived,—with the idea added here, which was not in the former member of the sentence, that his life *would be* long, or that he hoped and anticipated that he would live long on the earth. The phrase here used, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord," is one that is several times employed in the Psalms as indicative of the wish of the psalmist. Thus in Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Ps. xxvi. 8, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." Ps. lxv. 4, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." Ps. lxxxiv. 4, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." (Comp. also vers. 1, 3, and 10 of Psalm lxxxiv).

The *language* here is obviously taken from the employment of those who had their habitation near the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, whose business it was to attend constantly on the service of God, and to minister in his courts. We are not to suppose of David that he anticipated such a residence in or near the tabernacle or the house of God; but the meaning is, that he anticipated and desired a life *as if* he dwelt there, and *as if* he was constantly engaged in holy occupations. His life would be spent *as if* in the constant service of God; his joy and peace in religion would be *as if* he were always within the immediate dwelling-place of the Most High. This expresses the desire of a true child of God. He wishes to live *as if* he were always engaged in solemn acts of worship, and occupied in holy things; he desires peace and joy in religion *as if* he were constantly in the place where God makes his abode, and allowed to partake of his smiles and friendship. In a very important sense it *is* his privilege so to live even on earth; it *will* certainly be his privilege so to live in heaven: and, full of grateful exultation and joy, every child of God may adopt this language as his own, and say confidently, "Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life here, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever,"—for heaven, where God dwells, will be his eternal home.

PSALM XXIV.

There is no reason to doubt that the title of this psalm, which ascribes it to David, is correct. A portion of the psalm (vers. 3-6) has a strong resemblance to Psalm xv., and doubtless was composed by the same author.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not designated; but from its contents it was evidently on some public occasion of great solemnity; probably on the removal of the ark of the covenant into its appointed place in Jerusalem, where it was to abide permanently; a solemn entrance of Jehovah, as it were, into the place of his permanent abode, vers. 7-10. This could not have been the temple; for (*a*) that was not erected in the time of David; and (*b*) the description (vers. 7-10) is rather that of entering into a *city* than into a temple or a place of public worship, for the psalmist calls on the "*gates*" to lift up their heads,—an expression more suitable to a city than to the doors of a tabernacle or a temple. According to this view, no occasion seems more appropriate than that of removing the ark from the house of Obed-edom to "the city of David," or to Jerusalem, as described in 2 Sam. vi. 12-17. David indeed placed the ark "in the midst of the tabernacle which he had pitched for it" on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17), but the particular reference of the psalm would rather seem to be to the entrance of the ark into the city than into the tabernacle. It was probably designed to be sung as the procession approached the city where the ark was destined to remain. The occasion of thus taking up the ark into the holy hill where it was to abide seems to have suggested the inquiry, who would be fitted to ascend the holy hill where God abides, and to stand in his presence, vers. 3-6.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:—

I. An ascription of praise to God as the Maker and Upholder of all things, vers. 1, 2. He is represented as the proprietor of the whole earth, and as having a right to all that there is in the world, since he has made the earth and all which it contains. This universal claim, this recognition of him as Lord of all, would be peculiarly appropriate in bringing up the symbol of his existence and his power, and establishing his worship in the capital of the nation.

II. An inquiry, who would ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place;—who could be regarded as worthy to engage in his worship, and to be considered as his friend? vers. 3-6. This part of the psalm accords in the main with Ps. xv.; and the inquiry and the answer would be peculiarly appropriate on an occasion such as that on which the psalm appears to have been composed. In asserting God's claim to universal dominion (vers. 1, 2), and in introducing the symbols of his power into the place where he was to be recognised and adored (vers. 7-10), nothing could be more suitable than the question who would be regarded as qualified to worship before him; that is, who would be regarded as his friends. The essential

PSALM XXIV.

A Psalm of David.

THE earth *is* the LORD'S, *g* and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein:

g Ps. l. 12.

thing here asserted to be requisite, as in Ps. xv., is purity of heart and life,—things essential to the evidence of piety under every dispensation, patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian.

III. A responsive song on the entrance of the procession with the ark into the city, vers. 7-10. This consists of two strophes, to be sung, it would seem most probable, by responsive choirs:—

First strophe, vers. 7, 8.

(*a*) The call on the gates to lift up their heads, that the King of glory might come in.

(*b*) The response: Who is this King of glory?

(*c*) The answer: Jehovah, mighty in battle.

Second strophe, vers. 9, 10.

(*a*) The call on the gates to lift up their heads, that the King of glory might come in.

(*b*) The response: Who is this King of glory?

(*c*) The answer: Jehovah of hosts.

1. *The earth* is *the* LORD'S. The whole world belongs to God. He is the Creator of the earth, and therefore its proprietor; or, in other words, "the property vests in him." It belongs to him in a sense somewhat similar to our right of property in anything that is the production of our hands, or of our labour or skill. We claim that as our own. We feel that we have a right to use it, or to dispose of it, as we choose. No other man has a right to take it from us, or to dictate to us how we shall employ it. Thus God, in the highest possible sense, has a right to the earth, and to all which it produces, as being all of it the creation of his hands, and the fruit of his culture and skill. He has a right to dispose of it as he pleases;—by fire, or flood, or tempest;—and he has an equal right to direct man in what way *he* shall employ that portion of the productions of the earth which may be entrusted to him. All the right which any man has to any portion of the earth's surface, or to what is treasured up in the earth, or to what it is made to produce, is subordinate to the claims of God, and all should be yielded up at his bidding, whether he comes and claims it to be employed in his service, or whether he comes and sweeps it away by fire or flood; by the locust, or by the palmer-worm. ¶ *And the fulness thereof.* All which it contains; everything which goes to *fill up* the world:—animals, minerals, vegetables, men. All belong to God, and he has a right to claim them for his service, and to dispose of them as he pleases. This very language, so noble, so true, and so fit to be made conspicuous in the eyes of men, I saw inscribed in a place where it seemed to be most appropriate, and most adapted to arrest and direct the thoughts of men—on the front of the Royal Exchange in London. It was well to remind the great merchants of the largest commercial city in the world of the truth which it contains; it does much to describe the character of the British nation that it should be inscribed in a place so conspicuous, and, as it were, on the wealth of that great capital. ¶ *The world.* The word here used—תֵּבֵל, *tebel*—is a poetic word, referring to the earth considered as fertile and inhabited,—the *habitable* globe; the same as the Greek, *οἰκουμένη*. ¶ *And they that dwell therein.* All the inhabitants of the earth, embracing men and animals of all kinds. Comp. Ps. l. 10, 11. God has a claim on men—on their services, on their talents, on all that they can acquire by labour and skill; he has a right to all that fly in the air, or that walk the earth, or that swim in the sea. On the occasion on which it is supposed that this psalm was written, in bringing up the ark of God, and placing it in the tabernacle provided for it in the capital of the nation, no

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

3 Who [h] shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 [1] He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity; nor sworn deceitfully.

h Ps. xv.

[1] *the clean of hands.*

sentiment could be more appropriate than that which would recognise the universal supremacy of God.

2. *For he hath founded it upon the seas.* That is, the earth, or the habitable world. The ground of the claim to the earth and all that it contains, which is here asserted, is the fact that God had created it, or "founded" it. The language here used—"he hath *founded* it," that is, he has laid the foundation of it, "upon the seas" and "the floods"—is in accordance with the usual mode of speaking of the earth in the Scriptures as laid upon a foundation,—as a house is raised on a firm foundation. See Notes on Job xxxviii. 6. As the earth appeared to be surrounded by water, it was natural to speak of it as *founded* also upon the waters. There is probably an allusion here to the statement in Gen. i. 9, 10, where the waters are said to have been so gathered together that the dry land appeared. Above all the waters the earth was established, so as to become the abode of plants, animals, and men. ¶ *And established it upon the floods.* The streams; the torrents. The earth has been elevated above them, so as to be a residence for animals and for men. The essential thought is, that this earth has become what it is by the fact that God has founded it;—and, therefore, what it produces belongs of right to him.

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the* LORD? Mount Zion; called the hill of the Lord, because it was the place designated for his worship, or the place of his abode. See Notes on Ps. xv. 1. The idea here is, "Who shall ascend there with a view of abiding there? who is worthy to dwell there?" The question is equivalent to asking, What constitutes true religion? What is required for the acceptable worship of God? What will prepare a man for heaven? ¶ *Or who shall stand in his holy place?* In the tabernacle, or in the place where he is worshipped. Comp. Notes on Ps. i. 5. Who is worthy to stand before God? Who has the qualifications requisite to constitute the evidence of his friendship?

4. *He that hath clean hands.* In the parallel passage in Ps. xv. 2, the answer to the question is, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness." The sentiment is substantially the same there as in the passage before us. The meaning is, that he who would be recognised as a friend and worshipper of Jehovah must be an upright man; a man not living in the practice of iniquity, but striving always to do that which is right. The *hands* are the instruments by which we accomplish anything; and hence to have clean hands is equivalent to being upright. See Job xvii. 9; Isaiah i. 15; lix. 3; Acts ii. 23; Ps. xxvi. 10. The margin here, as the Hebrew, is *the clean of hands.* ¶ *And a pure heart.* Not merely he whose external conduct is upright, but whose heart is pure. The great principle is here stated which enters always into true religion, that it does not consist in outward conformity to law, or to the mere performance of rites and ceremonies, or to external morality, but that it controls the heart, and produces purity of motive and of thought. ¶ *Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.* Unto that which is *vain*, or which is *false.* This expression might refer to one who had not devoted himself to the worship of an idol,—regarded as vain, or as nothing (1 Cor. viii. 6; Isa. xli. 24; Ps. cxv. 4–8); or to one who had not

5 He [i] shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, [1] O Jacob. Selah.

[i] Isa. xxxiii. 15—17.
[1] Or, O God of *Jacob*.

embraced that which is false and vain in opinion; or to one who had not sworn falsely, or taken the name of God in vain, Ex. xx. 7. The probable meaning is, that he has not set his heart on vain things, or that which is false. He has sought after substantial truth, alike in the object of worship, in that which he professes to believe, and in the statements and promises which he makes to others. He aims to secure that which is true and real. He is in no sense "carried away" with that which is unreal and false. ¶ *Nor sworn deceitfully.* This is one form of that which had been just specified—his love of truth. The idea here is, that he has not affirmed, under the solemnities of an oath, that which was false; and that he has not, under similar solemnities, promised what he has not performed. He is a sincere man; a man seeking after the true and the real, and not running after shadows and falsehood; a man true to God and to his fellow-creatures; a man whose statements are in accordance with facts, and whose promises may be always relied on. In the parallel passage, in Ps. xv. 2, the statement is, "he that speaketh the truth in his heart." See Notes on that passage.

5. *He shall receive the blessing from the* LORD. Literally, "He shall bear away a blessing from Jehovah." The blessing here referred to means His favour and friendship. He shall be recognised and treated as his. In other words, God bestows his favour on those who possess the character here referred to. ¶ *And righteousness from the God of his salvation.* He shall be regarded and treated as righteous. Or, he shall obtain the Divine approval as a righteous man. The idea of the psalmist would seem to be, not that he would obtain this as if it were a gift, but that he would obtain the Divine *approval* of his character as righteous; he would be recognised and dealt with as a righteous man. He would come to God with "clean hands and a pure heart" (ver. 4), and would be welcomed and treated as a friend of God. The wicked and the impure could not hope to obtain this; but he who *was* thus righteous would be treated according to his real character, and would meet with the assurances of the Divine favour. It is as true now as it was in the days of the psalmist, that it is only the man who is in fact upright and holy that can obtain the evidences of the Divine approval. God will not regard one who is living in wickedness as a righteous man, nor will he admit such a man to his favour here, or to his dwelling-place hereafter.

6. *This* is *the generation of them that seek him.* This describes the race of those who seek him; or, this is their character. The word *generation* here is used evidently in the sense of *race, people,* or *persons.* This is the character or description of the *persons* who seek his favour; or, this is the character of his true friends. The phrase *to seek God* is often used as descriptive of true piety: Ps. ix. 10; xiv. 2; lxiii. 1; Prov. viii. 17; Matt. vi. 33; vii. 7. It indicates an earnest desire to know him and to obtain his favour. It denotes also humility of mind, and a sense of dependence on God. ¶ *That seek thy face, O Jacob.* Marg., O *God of* Jacob. De Wette understands this as meaning that they would seek the face of God *among* his people; or that they who belonged to the race of Jacob, and who were sincere, thus sought the face of God. There is supposed to be, according to this interpretation, a distinction between the true and the false Israel; between those who professed to be the people of God and those who really

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

8 Who *is* this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

were his people (comp. Rom. ix. 6–8). It seems to me that the word is not used here as it is in the margin to denote the "*God* of Jacob," which would be a harsh and an unusual construction, but that it is in apposition with the preceding words, as denoting what constituted the true Jacob, or the true people of God. "This is the generation of them that seek him; this is the true Jacob, that seek thy face, O Lord." That is, this is the characteristic of all who properly belong to the race of Jacob, or who properly belong to God as his true people. The sense, however, is not materially affected if we adopt the reading in the margin.

7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates.* Either the gates of the city, or of the house erected for the worship of God; most probably, as has been remarked, the former. This may be supposed to have been uttered as the procession approached the city where the ark was to abide, as a summons to admit the King of glory to a permanent residence there. It would seem not improbable that the gates of the city were originally made in the form of a portcullis, as the gates of the old castles in the feudal ages were, not to *open*, but to be *lifted up* by weights and pullies. In some of the old ruins of castles in Palestine there are still to be seen deep grooves in the *posts* of the gateway, showing that the door did not open and shut, but that it was drawn up or let down. (Land and the Book, vol. i. p. 376. One such I saw at Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight; and they were common in the castles erected in the Middle Ages.) There were some advantages in this, as they could be suddenly *let down* on an enemy about to enter, when it would be difficult to close them if they were made to open as doors and gates are commonly made. Thus understood, the "heads" of the gates would be the top, perhaps ornamented in some such way as to suggest the idea of a "head," and the command was that these should be elevated to admit the ark of God to pass. ¶ *And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.* The doors of a city or sanctuary that was now to be the permanent place of the worship of God. The ark was to be fixed and settled there. It was no longer to be moved from place to place. It had found a final home. The idea in the word "everlasting" is that of permanence. The place where the ark was to abide was to be the enduring place of worship; or was to endure as long as the worship of God in that form should continue. There is no evidence that the author of the psalm supposed that those doors would be literally *eternal*, but the language is such as we use when we say of anything that it is permanent and abiding. ¶ *And the King of glory shall come in.* The glorious King. The allusion is to God as a King. On the cover of the ark, or the mercy seat, the symbol of the Divine presence—the Shekinah—rested; and hence it was natural to say that God would enter through those gates. In other words, the cover of the ark was regarded as his abode—his seat—his throne; and, as thus occupying the mercy-seat, he was about to enter the place of his permanent abode. Comp. Ex. xxv. 17, 20, 22.

8. *Who is this King of glory?* This is probably the response of a portion of the choir of singers. The answer is found in the other part of the verse. ¶ *The* LORD *strong and mighty.* Jehovah, strong and mighty, —describing him by his most exalted attributes as a God of power. This is in accordance with the idea in vers. 1, 2, where he is represented as the Creator and the Proprietor of all the earth. Perhaps, also, there is an allusion to the fact that he is mighty, as

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

distinguished from idols which have no power. ¶ *The* LORD *mighty in battle.* Who displays his power eminently in overthrowing hostile armies;—perhaps in allusion to the victories which had been won when his people were animated in war by the presence of the ark in the midst of their armies, and when the victory could be properly traced to the fact that the ark, the symbol of the Divine presence, was with them, and when, therefore, the victory would be properly ascribed to Jehovah himself.

9. *Lift up your heads,* etc. The repetition here is designed to give force and emphasis to what is uttered. The response in ver. 5 is slightly varied from the response in ver. 8; but the same general sentiment is expressed. The design is to announce in a solemn manner that the symbol of the Divine presence and majesty was about to be introduced into the place of its permanent abode, and that this was an event worthy to be celebrated;—that even the gates of the city should voluntarily open themselves to admit the great and glorious King who was to reign there for ever.

10. *Who is this King of glory?* See Notes on ver. 8. ¶ *The* LORD *of hosts, he* is *the King of glory.* On the meaning of the phrase, "the Lord of hosts," see Notes on Isa. i. 9. The essential idea is, that God rules over the universe of worlds considered as marshalled in order, or arrayed as hosts or armies are for battle. All are under his command. The stars in the sky, that seem to be marshalled and led forth in such perfect and beautiful order,—the inhabitants of heaven in their different orders and ranks,—all these acknowledge him, and submit to him as the supreme God. In the close of the psalm, therefore, there is an exact accordance with the thought in the beginning, that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that he should everywhere be recognised and regarded as such. The entrance of the ark of the covenant into the place provided for it as a permanent residence was a fit occasion to proclaim this thought; and this *is* proclaimed in the psalm in a manner befitting so solemn an occasion and so sublime a truth.

PSALM XXV.

This purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that he was its author. There are no indications, however, of the occasion on which it was composed, nor is it possible now to ascertain that occasion. It is probably one of those which were composed in his leisure moments, with no outward existing cause—designed to express the feelings of piety in the calm contemplation of God and his perfections.

The peculiarity of the psalm is, that it is the first of that class of psalms which are known as *alphabetical,* in which the first word of each verse begins with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. One design of this mode of composition *may* have been to assist the memory; but it is probable that the prevailing reason was that it was regarded as a poetic beauty thus to arrange the letters of the alphabet. Such arts of poetry are common in all languages. Occasionally in these psalms the order of the letters is slightly changed; in other instances, some of the letters are omitted, while the general structure is observed. Specimens of this mode of composition occur in Ps. xxxiv., xxxvii., cxl., cxii., cxix., cxlv.; in Proverbs xxxi., from the tenth verse to the end of the chapter; and in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the whole of which book is composed on this plan, except the last chapter. The same mode of composition is common in Syrian and Persian poetry. See Assemani Biblioth. Orient. III., Pt. 1, p 63, 328. Comp. Lowth's Lectures on Heb. Poetry, Lect. xxii.; and Grotii Prolegomm. ad Com. in Psalmos, p. 81.

In the psalm before us, the general

order of the Hebrew alphabet is observed, with the following exceptions:—the two first verses commence with the letter א, *Aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; while the second letter, ב, *Beth*, is omitted. The letters ו, *Vau*, and ק, *Koph*, are also omitted, while two verses begin with the letter ר, *Resch;* and at the close of the psalm, after the letter ת, *Tau*—the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet,—another verse is added, beginning with the letter פ, *Phe*. We cannot account for these variations. Capellus supposes that it arises from the haste and want of attention of transcribers, and suggests a plan by which the alphabetical arrangement in this psalm could be restored to proper order. See Rosenmüller, Scholia in Ps. xxv., p. 633. J. D. Michaelis supposes that the authors of the psalm allowed to themselves some liberty in the arrangement, and that the proper letter of the alphabet was sometimes in the middle of the verse rather than at the beginning. But it is impossible to assign the reasons which may have existed for the want of perfect regularity in the composition of the psalm, and the deviations from the exact alphabetical order which occur. Those deviations are very slight, and do not affect the general character of the composition. Of course this poetic beauty cannot be perceived in a translation, and must be lost to all except to Hebrew scholars.

The general *plan* of these psalms seems to be, not to follow out one particular thought, or to dwell on one subject, but to bring together such independent expressions of pious feeling as could be conveniently arranged in this manner. Accordingly in the psalm before us we have a considerable variety of subjects introduced,—all *suggestive*, or all indicating the kind of thoughts which will pass through a pious mind in moments of relaxation, and *unbending*, when the thoughts are allowed to flow freely or without restraint from the will. The current of thought in such moments is often a more sure indication of the true state of the heart, and of the real character, than what occurs in our more studied and laboured habits of thinking; and a man may often look to these trains of thought as most certainly indicating the actual condition of his heart.

Among the thoughts thus suggesting themselves to the mind of the psalmist in this season of relaxation, and as indicating the real state of his heart, the following may be noticed:—

(1) Confident trust in God, and a feeling that that trust would not be disappointed, vers. 1-3.

(2) A desire to be led in the way of truth, vers. 4, 5.

(3) A desire that God, in his treatment of him, would remember His own merciful character, and not the sins of the psalmist, vers. 6, 7.

(4) A belief that God will guide those who trust him, vers. 8, 9.

(5) Confidence in God in all his ways, ver. 10.

(6) Prayer for the pardon of sin, ver. 11.

(7) An expression of belief that God will teach and guide those who fear him, vers. 12, 13.

(8) The assurance that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, ver. 14.

(9) Prayer for deliverance from all trouble, vers. 15-21.

(10) Prayer for the redemption of the people of God; for their complete deliverance from evil; for the salvation of the church, ver. 22.

The psalm thus expresses the feelings of a pious mind when running over a great variety of subjects, apparently with little connexion, or united only by a very slender thread of association; such thoughts as occur to one when the mind is allowed a free range, and follows out easy suggestions with no great effort to restrain the mind by the stricter rules of thinking, or when the mind allows itself to be easily drawn along from one subject to another, and finds, in each one that occurs, something to be thankful for; or to pray for; or to rejoice over; or to anticipate with pleasure; or to hope for; or to be penitent for; or to contemplate with gratitude and love. The thoughts of wicked men, when their minds are thus unbent and unstrung, recur to images of pollution and sin; they gloat over past indulgences; they recall the images of sensual pleasures; they bring before the fancy new and untried scenes of pollution; they revel in the anticipated pleasures of gaiety and sensuality. Perhaps there is nothing that more clearly indicates the real state of a man's heart than the kind of recollections, imaginings, and anticipations into which the mind falls in such a relaxed, or what some might call an

PSALM XXV.

A Psalm of David.

UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed; [i] let not mine enemies triumph over me.
3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

[i] Ps. xxii. 4, 5; Isa. xlix. 23.

idle, state of the mind;—just as we judge of a stream when it flows gently as left to its own course, not when it is dammed up, or forced into new channels, or swelled by rains, or made into artificial rills and water-falls, or employed to turn mills, or diverted, contrary to its natural flow, even into beautiful gardens.

1. *Unto thee*, O LORD, *do I lift up my soul.* In meditation; in gratitude; in praise. The idea is, that the thoughts are lifted up from earth and earthly subjects to God. This is the beginning of the meditation; this gives character, perhaps, to the psalm. The state of mind is that of one who turns cheerfully away from earthly themes, and opens his mind to more lofty and hallowed influences. The mind *begins* with God; and, beginning with this, the current of thought is allowed to flow on, gathering up such ideas as would come in under this general purpose. Opening the mind to this influence, thoughts would flow in upon the soul embracing a wide range, and perhaps not very closely connected among themselves, but all of which would be fitted to raise the heart to God in meditation, thankfulness, and praise.

2. *O my God, I trust in thee.* This is the first thought,—a feeling that he *had* true confidence in God, and that in all the duties of life, in all his trials, and in all his hopes for the future, his reliance was on God alone. ¶ *Let me not be ashamed.* That is, let me never be so forsaken by thee as to have occasion for shame that I *have* thus trusted in thee. The prayer is not that he might never be ashamed to avow and confess his trust in God, but that he might *find* God to be such a helper and friend that he might never be ashamed on account of the trust which he had put in him, as if it had been a false reliance; that he might not be disappointed, and made to feel that he had done a foolish thing in confiding in one who was not able to help him. See the word explained in the Notes on Job vi. 20. Comp. Isa. xxx. 5; Jer. viii. 9; xiv. 3, 4. ¶ *Let not mine enemies triumph over me.* This explains what the psalmist meant by his prayer that he might not be *ashamed*, or put to shame. He prayed that he might not be vanquished by his foes, and that it might not appear that he had trusted in a Being who was unable to defend him. Applied now to us, the prayer would imply a desire that we may not be so overcome by our spiritual foes as to bring dishonour on ourselves and on the cause which we profess to love; that we may not be held up to the world as those who are unable to maintain the warfare of faith, and exposed to scorn as those who are unfaithful to their trust; that we may not be so forsaken, so left to trial without consolation, so given over to sadness, melancholy, or despair, as to leave the world to say that reliance on God is vain, and that there is no advantage in being his friends.

3. *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.* To "wait on the Lord" is an expression denoting true piety, as indicating our dependence on him, and as implying that we look to him for the command that is to regulate our conduct and for the grace needful to protect and save us. Comp. Isa. xl. 31. See also Isa. viii. 17; xxx. 18; Ps. xl. 1; lxix. 3. This petition is indicative of the wish of the pious heart that none who profess to serve God may ever be put to shame; that they may never be overcome by sin; that they may never fall under the power of temptation; that they may

4 Show [k] me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

[k] Isa. ii. 3; Jer. l. 5.

not fail of eternal salvation. ¶ *Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.* This does not imply that any sinners transgress otherwise than without cause, or that they have any good reason for sinning; but it brings into view a prominent thought in regard to sin, that it *is* without cause. If the wicked *had* any good reason for their course of life,—if they were compelled to do wrong,—if the temptations under which they act were so powerful that they could not resist them,—if they were not voluntary in their transgressions,—then true benevolence would demand of us the prayer that they might *not* be confounded or put to shame. But as none of these circumstances occur in the case of the sinner, there is no want of benevolence in praying that all the workers of evil may be put to confusion; that is, that they may not triumph in an evil course, but that their plans may be defeated, and that they may be arrested in their career. There is no benevolence in desiring the triumph of wickedness; there is no want of benevolence in praying that all the plans of wicked men may be confounded, and all the purposes of evil be frustrated. True benevolence requires us to pray that all their plans *may* be arrested, and that the sinner may *not* be successful in his career. A man may be certain that he is acting out the principles of benevolence when he endeavours to prevent the consummation of the plans and the desires of the wicked.

4. *Show me thy ways, O* LORD. The "ways" of God are his methods of administering the affairs of the world; his dispensations; the rules which he has prescribed for himself in the execution of his plans; the great laws by which he governs the universe. Deut. xxxii. 4, "All his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." The prayer of the psalmist is, that he may be able to understand the methods of the Divine government; the principles on which God bestows happiness and salvation; the rules which he has been pleased to prescribe for human conduct; the arrangements by which he confers favours on mankind; the scheme by which he saves men. The idea evidently is that he might understand so much of this as to regulate his own conduct aright; that he might not lean to his own understanding, or trust to his own guidance, but that he might ever be under the guidance and direction of God. ¶ *Teach me thy paths.* The paths which thou dost take; to wit, as before, in administering the affairs of the world. The prayer is expressive of a desire to be wholly under the direction of God.

5. *Lead me in thy truth.* In the way which thou regardest as truth, or which thou seest to be true. Truth is eternal and unchanging. What God sees and regards as truth *is* true, for he sees things as they are; and when we have the Divine estimate of anything, we understand what the thing is. It is not that he *makes* it to be true, but that he *sees* it to be true. Such is the perfection of his nature that we have the utmost assurance that what God regards as truth *is* truth; what he proclaims to be right *is* right. It is then *His* truth, as he adopts it for the rule of his own conduct, and makes it known to his creatures to guide them. ¶ *And teach me.* As this would be understood by the psalmist, it would be a prayer that God would teach him by his law as then made known; by his Spirit in the heart; by the dispensations of his providence. As applicable to us, it is a prayer that he would instruct us by all the truths then made known, and all that have

6 Remember, O LORD, thy [1] tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old.

7 Remember not the sins of my [l] youth, nor my transgressions: according [m] to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

[1] *bowels*, Isa. lxiii. 15.

l Job xiii. 26.
m Ps. li. 1.

since been revealed; by his Spirit in its influences on our hearts; by the events which are occurring around us; by the *accumulated* truth of ages;—the knowledge which by all the methods he employs he has imparted to men for their guidance and direction. ¶ *For thou* art *the God of my salvation.* The word *salvation* is not to be understood here in the sense in which it is now commonly used, as denoting deliverance from sin and future ruin, but in the more general sense of *deliverance*—deliverance from danger and death. The phrase is synonymous with *preservation*, and the idea is that the psalmist regarded God as his preserver; or that he owed his protection and safety in the time of danger to Him alone. ¶ *On thee do I wait.* That is, I rely on thee; or, I am dependent on thee. He had no other source of reliance or dependence. ¶ *All the day.* Continually, always. He was *really* dependent on him at all times, and he *felt* that dependence. It is always true that we are dependent on God for everything; it is not true that we always *feel* this. It was a characteristic of the piety of the psalmist that he *did* feel this.

6. *Remember, O* LORD. That is, In thy future treatment of me, bring to remembrance what thou hast done, and treat me in the same manner still. The language is that of one who felt that God had always been kind and gracious, and who asked for the future a continuance of the favours of the past. If we would recall the goodness of God in the past, we should find enough to lay the foundation of prayer in reference to that which is to come. If we saw and understood fully all that has happened to us, we should need to offer no other prayer than that God might deal with us in the future as he has done in the past. ¶ *Thy tender mercies.* Marg., as in Heb., *thy bowels.* The Hebrew word means *the inner parts*, regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the affections. See Notes on Isa. xvi. 11. ¶ *And thy loving-kindnesses.* Thy tokens of favour; thy acts of mercy and compassion. ¶ *For they* have been *ever of old.* "For from eternity are they." The language is that of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of the goodness of God. In looking over his own life, the author of the psalm saw that the mercies of God had been unceasing and constant towards him from his earliest years. In words expressive of warm love and gratitude, therefore, he says that those acts of mercy had never failed—had been from eternity. His thoughts rise from the acts of God toward himself to the character of God, and to His attributes of mercy and love; and his heart is full of the idea that God is *always* good; that it belongs to His very nature to do good.

7. *Remember not the sins of my youth.* In strong contrast with God, the psalmist brings forward his own conduct and life. He could ask of God (ver. 6) to remember His own acts—what *He himself* had done; but could not ask him to remember *his* conduct—*his* past life. He could only pray that this might be forgotten. He did not wish it to come into remembrance before God; he could not ask that God would deal with him according to that. He prays, therefore, that he might not be visited as he advanced in life with the fruits of his conduct in early years, but that all the offences of that period of his life might be forgiven and forgotten. Who is there that cannot with deep feeling join in this prayer? Who is there that has reached the

8 Good and upright *is* the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

9 The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.

period of middle or advanced life, who would be willing to have the follies of his youth, the plans, and thoughts, and wishes of his early years brought again to remembrance? Who would be willing to have recalled to his own mind, or made known to his friends, to society around him, or to assembled worlds, the thoughts, the purposes, the wishes, the *imaginings* of his youthful days? Who would dare to pray that he might be treated in advancing years as he treated God in his own early life? Nay, who would venture to pray that God would treat him in the day of judgment as he had treated the friends of his childhood, even the father that begat him, or the mother that bare him? Our hope in regard to the favour of God is that he will *not* summon up the thoughts and the purposes of our early years; that he will *not* treat us as if he remembered them; but that he will treat us as if they were forgotten. ¶ *Nor my transgressions.* The sins of my early years. ¶ *According to thy mercy remember thou me.* Deal with me, not according to strict justice, but according to mercy. Deal with me indeed according to thy nature and character; but let the attribute of mercy be that which will be the guide rather than the attribute of justice. ¶ *For thy goodness' sake.* In order that thy goodness or benevolence may be displayed and honoured —not primarily and mainly that *I* may be saved, but that thy character may be seen to be good and merciful.

8. *Good and upright* is *the* LORD. His character is benevolent, and he is worthy of confidence. He is not merely *good,* but he is equal and just in his dealings with men. This latter attribute is no less a reason for confidence in his character than the former. We need a God who is not merely benevolent and kind, but who is just and faithful; whose administration is based on principles of truth and justice, and in whose dealings, therefore, his creatures can repose unlimited confidence. ¶ *Therefore will he teach sinners.* Because he is good and upright, we may approach him with the assurance that he will guide us aright. His *goodness* may be relied on as furnishing evidence that he will be *disposed* to do this; his *uprightness* as furnishing the assurance that the path in which he will lead us will be the best path. We could not rely on mere benevolence, for it might lack wisdom and firmness, or might lack power to execute its own purposes; we can rely on it when it is connected with a character that is infinitely upright, and an arm that is infinitely mighty. ¶ *In the way.* In the right way—the way in which they should go, the path of truth, of happiness, of salvation.

9. *The meek will he guide.* The humble, the teachable, the prayerful, the gentle of spirit—those who are willing to learn. A proud man who supposes that he already knows enough cannot be taught; a haughty man who has no respect for others, cannot learn of them; a man who is willing to believe nothing cannot be instructed. The first requisite, therefore, in the work of religion, as in respect to all kinds of knowledge, is a meek and docile spirit. See Matt. xviii. 3. ¶ *In judgment.* In a right judgment or estimate of things. It is not merely in the administration of justice, or in doing *right,* but it is in judging of truth; of duty; of the value of objects; of the right way to live; of all on which the mind can be called to exercise judgment, or to come to a decision. ¶ *And the meek will he teach his way.* The way in which he would have them to go. The *methods* by which God does this are (1) By his word or law, (*a*) laying down there the principles which are to guide human conduct, and (*b*) in numerous cases furnishing specific

10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth unto such [n] as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

n Hos. xiv. 9.

11 For [o] thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it *is* [p] great.

o Ps. lxxix. 9; Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32; 1 John ii. 12. *p* Rom. v. 15—21.

rules for directing our conduct in the relations of life; (2) by his Spirit, (*a*) disposing the mind to candour, (*b*) enlightening it to see the truth, and (*c*) making it honest and sincere in its inquiries; (3) by his providence, —often indicating, in an unexpected manner, to those who are sincere in their inquiries after truth and duty, what he would have them to do; and (4) by the advice and counsel of those who have experience,—the aged and the wise,—those who have themselves been placed in similar circumstances, or who have passed through the same perplexities and embarrassments. By all these methods a man who goes to God in humble prayer, and with a proper sense of dependence, may trust that he will be guided aright; and it is not probable that a case could occur in which one who should honestly seek for guidance by these helps, might not feel assured that God would lead him aright. Having used these means, a man may feel assured that God will not leave him to error.

10. *All the paths of the* LORD. All the ways that the Lord takes; all that he commands; all that he does. The "paths of the Lord" denote the course in which he himself walks, or his dealings with his creatures. In the previous verse, the psalmist had said that the Lord would teach *His way* to the "meek;" he now says that all His ways are ways of mercy and of truth; or that all will be found to be in the direction of mercy and of truth. ¶ Are *mercy and truth.* In all his dealings with those who "keep his covenant" he shows himself to be at the same time merciful and true:—compassionate towards their errors; faithful to his own promises. ¶ *To such as keep his covenant.* To those who are his friends; to those who are faithful to him. This expression is often used to denote those who are the true people of God, Gen. xvii. 9, 10; Ex. xix. 5; Deut. xxix. 9; Ps. cxxxii. 12. The word *covenant* here is equivalent to *command* or *law;* and the idea is, that if they keep his laws they will find him to be merciful and true. On the meaning of the word *covenant,* see Notes on Acts vii. 8; Heb. viii. 8; ix. 16, 17. ¶ *And his testimonies.* The word *testimony* in the Scripture, in this connexion, refers to that to which God bears witness as *true;* or that which he has declared to be truth. In this sense the phrase means here those who maintain his truth; or who abide by what he has pronounced to be true. The word is very often used in the Scriptures to denote the truth of God and the commandments of God. In all such cases there is the underlying idea that the command or the statement referred to is that to which God bears witness as true or right.

11. *For thy name's sake, O* LORD. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 3. The idea here is that God would do this on his own account, or for the honour of his own name. This is *a* reason, and one of the main reasons, why God ever pardons iniquity. It is that the honour of his name may be promoted; that his glorious character may be displayed; that he may *show* himself to the universe to be merciful and gracious. There are, doubtless, other reasons why he pardons sin—reasons drawn from the bearing which the act of mercy will have on the welfare of the universe; but still the main reason is, that his own honour will thus be promoted, and his true character thus made known. See Notes on Isa. xlii. 25; xlviii. 9. Comp. Ps. vi. 4; and verse 7 of this psalm. ¶ *Pardon mine iniquity.* This prayer seems to have been offered in view of the remembered

12 What man *is* he that feareth the LORD? him [q] shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.

[q] Ps. xxxii. 8; xxxvii. 23.

13 His soul shall [1] dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit [r] the earth.

[1] *lodge in goodness.* [r] Ps. xxxvii. 11, 22.

transgressions of his early years, ver. 7. These recollected sins apparently pressed upon his mind all through the psalm, and were the main reason of the supplications which occur in it. Comp. vers. 16—18. ¶ *For it* is *great.* As this translation stands, the fact that his sin was great was a *reason* why God should pardon it. This is a reason, because (*a*) it would be felt that the sin was so great that it could not be removed by any one but God, and that unless *forgiven* it would sink the soul down to death; and (*b*) because the mere fact of its magnitude would tend to illustrate the mercy of the Lord. Undoubtedly these *are* reasons why we may pray for the forgiveness of sin; but it may be doubted whether this is the exact idea of the psalmist, and whether the word *although* would not better express the true sense,—"*although* it is great." It is true that the general sense of the particle here rendered "for"—כִּי, *ki*—is *because* or *since;* but it may also mean *although,* as in Ex. xiii. 17, "God led them not the way through the land of the Philistines, *although* — (כִּי) — that was near," *i. e.* that was nearest, or was the most direct way. So in Deut. xxix. 19, "I shall have peace, *though* — (כִּי) —I walk in the imagination of mine heart." Also Josh. xvii. 18, "Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, *though* — (כִּי)—they have iron chariots, and *though* they be strong." Thus understood, the prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would pardon his offences *although* they were so great. His mind is fixed on the *greatness* of the offences; on the obstacles in the way of pardon; on his own unworthiness; on the fact that he had no claim to mercy; and he presents this strong and earnest plea that God would have mercy on him *although* his sins were so numerous and so aggravated. In this prayer all can join; this is a petition the force of which all true penitents deeply feel.

12. *What man* is *he.* Who is he. The statement in this verse is intended to include every man; or to be universal. Wherever one is found who has the character here referred to, or whoever he may be, of him what is here affirmed will be true, that God will lead him in the way that he shall choose. ¶ *That feareth the* LORD. That is, a true worshipper of Jehovah, or that is truly a pious man: Ps. v. 7. ¶ *Him shall he teach.* He will guide, or instruct him. See ver. 9. ¶ *In the way* that *he shall choose.* The way that the man ought to choose; or, in other words, in the right way. It is not the way that *God* shall choose, but the way that the pious man ought to choose: God will so instruct him that he shall find the true path.

13. *His soul shall dwell at ease.* Marg., *shall lodge in goodness.* So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one *at home;* one who finds a comfortable and safe resting-place; one who is not a wanderer or a vagrant. The word rendered in the text *at ease,* and in the margin *goodness,* means *good;* and the idea is that of a good or safe condition as compared with that of one who wanders abroad without a shelter, or of one who has lost his way, and has no one to guide him. As contrasted with such an one, he who fears God, and who seeks his guidance and direction, will be like a man in his own comfortable and quiet home. The one is a condition of safety and of ease; the other, a condition of anxiety, doubt, trouble. Nothing could better describe the calmness, peace, and conscious security of the man who has found the truth and who serves God,—as compared with the state of that man who

14 The secret [s] of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and [1] he will show them his covenant.

15 Mine eyes *are* ever toward the LORD; for he shall [2] pluck my feet out of the [t] net.

16 Turn [u] thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I *am* desolate and afflicted.

[s] Prov. iii. 32; John vii. 17; Eph. i. 9, 18.
[1] Or, *his covenant to make them know* it.
[2] *bring forth.*
[t] Ps. cxxiv. 7, 8.
[u] Mic. vii. 19.

has no religion, no fear of God, no hope of heaven. ¶ *And his seed.* His posterity; his family. ¶ *Shall inherit the earth.* Originally this promise referred to the land of Canaan, as a promise connected with obeying the law of God: Ex. xx. 12. It came then to be synonymous with outward worldly prosperity; with length of days, and happiness in the earth. See it explained in the Notes on Matt. v. 5.

14. *The secret of the* LORD. On the word here rendered *secret,* see Notes on Job xv. 8. It properly means a couch or cushion; and then, a *divan* or circle of friends sitting together; then, deliberation or consultation; then, familiar intercourse, intimacy; and then, a *secret,*—as if it were the result of a private consultation among friends, or something which pertained to them, and which they did not wish to have known. It is rendered *secret* in Gen. xlix. 6; Job xv. 8; xxix. 4; Ps. xxv. 14; Prov. iii. 32; xi. 13; xx. 19; xxv. 9; Amos iii. 7;—*counsel* in Ps. lv. 14; lxiv. 2; lxxxiii. 3; Jer. xxiii. 18, 22;—and *assembly* in Ps. lxxxix. 7; cxi. 1; Jer. vi. 11; xv. 17; Ezek. xiii. 9. The word *friendship* would perhaps express the meaning here. The sense is, that those who fear the Lord are admitted to the intimacy of friendship with him; are permitted to come into his presence, and to partake of his counsels; are allowed free access to him; or, as it is more commonly expressed, have *fellowship* with him. Comp. 1 John i. 3. The language is such as would be applied to the intimacy of friends, or to those who take counsel together. The language belongs to a large class of expressions denoting the close connexion between God and his people. ¶ *With them that fear him.* With those who truly and properly reverence him, or who are his true worshippers: Ps. v. 7; Job i. 1. ¶ *And he will show them his covenant.* Marg., *And his covenant to make them know* it. The meaning is, that God will impart to them the true knowledge of his covenant; or, in other words, he will enable them to understand what there is in that covenant, or in its gracious provisions, that is adapted to promote their happiness and salvation. The word *covenant* here is the same term which is commonly used to describe the arrangements which God has made for the salvation of men: see ver. 10. Whatever there is in that arrangement to promote the happiness and salvation of his people, he will cause them to understand.

15. *Mine eyes* are *ever toward the* LORD. This is an indication of the habitual state of mind of the psalmist. He had said that God would lead and guide those who were meek, gentle, teachable, humble; and he now says that this was his habitual state of mind. He constantly looked to God. He sought his direction. In perplexity, in doubt, in difficulty, in danger, in view of death and the future world, he looked to God as his guide. In other words, in reference to himself, he carried out the principles which he had stated as constituting true religion. It was a religion of dependence on God, for man's only hope is in him. ¶ *For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.* Marg., *bring forth.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ix. 15, 16; x. 9. The *net* here is that which had been laid for him by the wicked. He trusted in God alone to deliver him from it.

16. *Turn thee unto me.* The Hebrew rather means *look upon me.*

17 The troubles of my heart are "enlarged: *O* bring thou me out of my distresses.

u Hab. iii. 17—19.

18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

19 Consider mine enemies; for

The idea, however, is that the face of God was, as it were, turned in another direction, or that he was not attentive to him; and he prays that he would turn and behold him; that he would *see* him in his trouble. ¶ *And have mercy upon me.* The psalmist seems to have felt that *if* God would look upon him he *would* pity him. He would see his case to be so sad that he would show him compassion,—as, when we see an object of distress, "the eye affects the heart." ¶ *For I* am *desolate.* The word here rendered *desolate*—יָחִיד, *yahhid*—means properly *one alone, only;* and then, one who *is alone,* or who is solitary, forsaken, wretched. There is no deeper sadness that ever comes over the mind than the idea that we are *alone* in the world; that we have not a friend; that no one cares for us; that no one is concerned about anything that may happen to us; that no one would care if we should die; that no one would shed a tear over our grave. ¶ *And afflicted.* In what way we do not know. David, however, was very often in circumstances when he could use this language. The other parts of the psalm show that the "affliction" to which he here refers was that which arose from the recollection of the sins of his early life, and from the designs and purposes of his enemies.

17. *The troubles of my heart.* The sorrows which spring upon the heart,—particularly from the recollections of sin. ¶ *Are enlarged.* Have become great. They increased the more he reflected on the sins of his life. ¶ O *bring thou me out of my distresses.* Alike from my sins, and from the dangers which surround me. These two things, external trouble and the inward consciousness of guilt, are not infrequently combined. Outward trouble has a tendency to bring up the remembrance of past transgressions, and to suggest the inquiry whether the affliction is not a Divine visitation for sin. Any one source of sorrow may draw along numerous others in its train. The laws of association are such that when the mind rests on one source of joy, and is made cheerful by that, numerous other blessings will be suggested to increase the joy; and when one great sorrow has taken possession of the soul, all the lesser sorrows of the past life cluster around it, so that we seem to ourselves to be wholly abandoned by God and by man.

18. *Look upon mine affliction and my pain.* See ver. 16. This is a repetition of earnest pleading—*as if* God still turned away from him, and did not deign to regard him. In trouble and distress piety thus pleads with God, and *repeats* the earnest supplication for his help. Though God *seems* not to regard the prayer, faith does not fail, but renews the supplication, confident that he will yet hear and save. ¶ *And forgive all my sins.* The mind, as above remarked, connects trouble and sin together. When we are afflicted, we naturally inquire *whether* the affliction is not on account of some particular transgressions of which we have been guilty; and even when we cannot trace any *direct* connexion with sin, affliction suggests the general fact that we *are* sinners, and that *all* our troubles are originated by that fact. One of the benefits of affliction, therefore, is to call to our remembrance our sins, and to keep before the mind the fact that we are violators of the law of God. This connexion between suffering and sin, in the sense that the one naturally suggests the other, was more than once illustrated in the miracles wrought by the Saviour. See Matt. ix. 2.

19. *Consider mine enemies.* See ver. 2. It is evident that *one* source

they are many; and they hate me with [1] cruel hatred.

20 O keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed: for I put my trust in thee.

[1] *hatred of violence.*

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

22 Redeem [v] Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

[v] Ps. cxxx. 8.

of the trouble referred to in the psalm was the fact that he had cruel foes, and that he was apprehensive of their designs. The train of thought seems to be, in accordance with the remarks above, that enemies actually surrounded him, and threatened him, and that this fact suggested the inquiry whether this was not permitted on account of his sins. *This* had led him to think of the sins of his past life, going back as far as his youth (ver. 7), as if these calamities, even in advanced life, were on account of those early offences. ¶ *For they are many.* Who and what they were, we have now no means of ascertaining. See Notes on ver. 16. ¶ *And they hate me with cruel hatred.* Marg., as in Heb., *hatred of violence.* It was such hatred as tended to violence; such that they could not restrain it. It sought his destruction, and was ready to break out at any moment.

20. *O keep my soul.* My *life;* or, keep *me.* The allusion is to *all* the perils which encompassed him, whether arising from his foes or his sins; and the prayer is, that the Divine protection might be commensurate with the danger; that is, that he might not be destroyed, either by his enemies or by the sins which he had committed. ¶ *And deliver me.* Save me; rescue me. ¶ *Let me not be ashamed.* See ver. 2. ¶ *For I put my trust in thee.* This is urged as a *reason* why he should be delivered and saved. The idea seems to be, that the honour of God would be concerned in protecting one who fled to him; who confided in him; who relied on him. Thus, when the helpless and the oppressed have so much confidence in our character and our ability as to fly to us in the time of trouble, it is a proper reason for them to ask our protection that they do confide in us. Our character becomes involved in the matter, and they may safely trust that we shall feel ourselves under obligations to act in conformity with the confidence reposed in us. It is thus that the poor and the oppressed confide in the good; thus that a sinner confides in God.

21. *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.* The word here rendered *integrity* means properly *perfection.* See it explained in the Notes on Job i. 1. The language here may refer either (*a*) to God—as denoting *his* perfection and uprightness, and then the psalmist's prayer would be that he, a righteous God, would keep him; or (*b*) to his own integrity and uprightness of character, and then the prayer would be that *that* might be the means of keeping him, as the ground of his safety, under the government of a righteous God; or, (*c*) which I think the more probable meaning, it may be the utterance of a prayer that God would show himself upright and perfect in protecting one who put his trust in him; one who was wronged and injured by his fellow-men; one who fled to God for refuge in time of persecution and trouble. It was not exactly the Divine perfections, as such, on which he relied; nor was it the integrity and purity of his own life; but it was the government of God, considered as just and equal, as bearing on himself and those who had wronged him. ¶ *For I wait on thee.* That is, I depend on thee, or I rely on thee. This is a reason why he pleaded that God would preserve him. See Notes on ver. 20.

22. *Redeem Israel.* Redeem or save thy people,—the word *Israel* here being used, as elsewhere, to denote

the people of God. ¶ *Out of all his troubles.* Save thy people from persecution, and from trial of all kinds. The prayer of the psalmist had, before this, related mainly to himself. He had made mention of his own troubles and sorrows, and had earnestly sought relief. The psalm, however, closes appropriately with a reference to others; to all the people of God who might be in similar circumstances. Religion is not selfish. The mind under the influence of true piety, however intensely it may feel its own trouble, and however earnestly it may pray for deliverance, is not forgetful of the troubles of others; and prayers for their comfort and deliverance are freely mingled with those which the afflicted children of God offer for themselves. This verse may be, therefore, taken as an illustration of the nature of true piety: —piety that seeks the welfare of all; piety that does not terminate in itself alone; piety that desires the happiness of all men, especially the deliverance of the suffering and the sad. It should, however, be added that this verse is no part of the alphabetical series in the psalm,—that having been ended, in ver. 21, with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This verse commences with the Hebrew letter פ, P. Some have supposed that it was added to the psalm when it was prepared for public use, in order to make what was at first applicable to an individual appropriate as a part of public worship,—or because the sentiments in the psalm, originally having reference to one individual, were as applicable to the people of God generally as to the author of the psalm. There is some plausibility in this conjecture.

PSALM XXVI.

The title affirms this to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription; but there are no indications by which we can determine on what occasion it was written.

It is not difficult, however, to ascertain from its contents the state of mind in which it was composed; and as that state of mind is not uncommon among those who are the professed people of God, the psalm will be useful in all ages of the world. The state of mind is that in which there is deep solicitude in regard to personal piety, or on the question whether the evidences of our piety are genuine, and are such as we may rely on as warranting our hope of salvation. In this state of mind, and under this deep solicitude, the psalmist appeals to God to search him, or to judge in his case; he then recounts the evidences on which he relied as a ground for concluding that he was truly a friend of God; and then expresses the earnest desire of his heart *to be* found among the friends of God, and not to be united in character or in destiny with the wicked.

The psalm, therefore, properly consists of three parts:—

I. A solemn appeal to God, or an earnest prayer that *He* would examine and judge of the evidences of piety on which the psalmist was accustomed to rely, vers. 1, 2. He was conscious of integrity or uprightness of intention, but he still felt that there was a possibility that he might deceive himself, and he therefore prays that God would search his heart and try his reins,—that *He* would examine the evidences of his personal piety, and save him from delusion.

II. A statement of the evidences on which he relied, vers. 3-8.

These evidences were the following:

(1) That God's loving-kindness was before his eyes, and that he had walked in his truth, ver. 3.

(2) That he had not been the companion of the wicked, nor had he delighted to associate with them, vers. 4, 5.

(3) The desire of his heart to approach the altar of God with purity, and to celebrate the praises of God;—or his delight in public worship, vers. 6, 7.

(4) That he had loved the place where God dwelt, or the habitation of his house, ver. 8.

III. His earnest wish to be found among the friends of God, or to have his portion with them, vers. 9-12.

(1) His *prayer* that this might be his lot, vers. 9, 10.

(2) His *purpose* to walk with the just and the holy, or to be found among the friends of God, vers. 11, 12.

In reference to all this, he asks the guidance and direction of God; he prays for the searching of his eye; he pleads

PSALM XXVI.

A Psalm of David.

JUDGE me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide.

2 Examine [w] me, O LORD, and prove me; try [x] my reins and my heart.

[w] Ps. cxxxix. 23. [x] Zech. xiii. 9.

that God would enable him sincerely to carry out these desires and purposes of his soul. The psalm is a beautiful illustration of the nature of true religion, and of the desire of a truly pious man that all the evidences of his piety—all which is his ground of reliance—may be submitted to the searching eye of God.

1. *Judge me, O* LORD. That is, determine in regard to my case whether I am truly thy friend, or whether the evidences of my piety are genuine. The psalmist asks an examination of his own case; he brings the matter before God for Him to decide; he submits the facts in regard to himself to God, that He may pronounce upon them whether they constitute evidence of real piety. ¶ *For I have walked in mine integrity.* On the word *walk*, see Notes on Ps. i. 1. The word *integrity* here is the same which is elsewhere rendered *perfection*. See Notes on Job i. 1. Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 37. See also Ps. vii. 8; xxv. 21; where the word is rendered, as here, *integrity*. It means here *uprightness, sincerity*. This is the first thing which he brings before God for him to examine—the consciousness that he had endeavoured to live an upright life; and yet it is referred to as if he was sensible that he *might* have deceived himself, and therefore he prays that God would determine whether his life had been really upright. ¶ *I have trusted also in the* LORD. Of this, likewise, he felt conscious; but this too he desired to submit to God. Trust in Jehovah, and an upright life, constituted the evidence of piety, or were the constituents of true religion according to the views of the Hebrews, as they are the constituents of true religion everywhere; and the purpose of the psalmist was to ascertain whether his piety was really of that character. ¶ Therefore *I shall not slide.* If these are really traits of my character, if I really possess these, I shall not be moved. My feet will be firm, and I shall be secure. Or this may be regarded as a further declaration in regard to himself, as indicating firm confidence in God, and as meaning that he was conscious that he would not be moved, or would not swerve in this purpose of life. And yet the next verse shows that, with all this confidence as to his own character, he felt that there was a *possibility* of his having deceived himself; and, therefore, he pleaded that God would search and try him.

2. *Examine me, O* LORD. The meaning of this verse is, that he asked of God a strict and rigid examination of his case. To express this, the psalmist uses three words—*examine; prove; try.* These words are designed to include the modes in which the reality of anything is tested, and they imply together that he wished the most *thorough* investigation to be made; he did not shrink from *any* test. He evidently felt that it was essential to his welfare that the most rigid examination should be made; that the exact truth should be known; that if he was deceived, it was best for himself that he should not be left under the delusion, but that, understanding his own case, he might be led to secure his salvation. The word rendered *examine* means, *to try, to prove*, and is applicable especially to metals: Jer. ix. 7; Zech. xiii. 9. It means here, "Apply to me such tests as are applied to metals in order to determine their genuineness and their value." ¶ *And prove me.* A word of similar import. In the original meaning of the word there is a reference to *smell;* to try by the smell; to ascertain the qualities of an object by the smell. Hence it comes

3 For thy loving-kindness *is* before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth.

4 I [y] have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

[y] Ps. i. 1.

to be used in a more general sense to denote any way of ascertaining the quality of an object. ¶ *Try my reins.* The word here rendered *try* is one that is most commonly applied to metals; and the three words together express the earnest desire of the psalmist that God would examine into the evidences of his piety—those evidences to which he immediately refers—and apply the proper kind of tests to determine whether that piety was genuine. The word rendered *reins* means properly the *kidneys*, and hence it is used to denote the inward part, the mind, the soul—the seat of the desires and the affections. See Notes on Ps. vii. 9; xvi. 7. We speak now of the *heart* as the seat of the affections or of love. The Hebrews more commonly spoke of the heart as the seat of intelligence or knowledge, and the reins or the "bowels" as the seat of the affections. In itself there was no more impropriety in their speaking of the reins or kidneys as the seat of the affections than there is of our speaking of the heart in that manner. Neither of them is strictly correct; and both modes of speech are founded on popular usage.

3. *For thy loving-kindness* is *before mine eyes.* Thy favour or friendship is constantly before me, in the sense that it is the object of my desire. I wish to secure it; I long to know whether I have sufficient evidence that it is mine. This is a reason why he desires that God would search him. The favour or the friendship of God was an object of intense desire with him. He had evidence on which he relied, and which seemed to him to be satisfactory, that God was his friend. But the object was so great, the matter was so important, the danger of self-deception was so imminent, that he did not dare to trust his own judgment, and he prayed that God would search him. The thought here is, that it was a steady purpose of his life to secure the favour of God. His eye was never turned from this. It was always before him. ¶ *And I have walked in thy truth.* I have embraced the truth; I have regulated my life by the truth. This is the first thing to which he refers. He was certain that this had been his aim. Comp. Notes on 3 John 4. See also 2 Kings xx. 3. One of the first characteristics of piety is a desire to know what is true, and to live in accordance with the truth. The psalmist was conscious that he had *arrived* at this, and that he had endeavoured to make it a ruling principle in his conduct. Whether he *had* done this, or whether he had deceived himself in the matter, was what he now wished to submit to the all-searching eye of God.

4. *I have not sat with vain persons.* That is, I have not been found among them; I have not made them my companions. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. The word "*vain*" here is in contrast with those who are sincere and true. The expression would be applied to men who are false and hollow; to those who have no sincerity or solidity of character; to those who are hypocrites and pretenders. The psalmist urges it as one evidence of his attachment to God that he had not been found among that class of persons, either as making them his companions, or as taking part with them in their counsels. ¶ *Neither will I go in with dissemblers.* Neither will I walk with them; neither will I be found in their company. The word here rendered *dissemblers* means properly those who are *hidden* or *concealed*; then, those who hide their purposes or designs from others, or who conceal their real character and intentions. Thus used, the word denotes hypocrites, whose real character is *concealed* or *hidden* from the world. The psalmist says

5 I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

z Ex. xxx. 19, 20.

6 I will wash [z] mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

7 That I may publish with the

that he had not associated with such men, but that his companionship had been with the open, the frank, the sincere. On this he relied as one evidence of his piety; and this *is* always an evidence of true religion. See Notes on Ps. i. 1.

5. *I have hated.* We have here the same evidence of his piety repeated in another and a stronger form. In the previous verse he had merely stated that he had not been found among that class of persons, or that he had not made them his companions. He here says positively that he disapproved of their principles; that he hated the purpose for which they gathered themselves together; that he had no sympathy whatever with them. ¶ *The congregation of evil-doers.* All such assemblages as were gathered together for wicked purposes; for sin and revelry; to plot wickedness; to injure men; to oppose God. ¶ *And will not sit with the wicked.* That is, I will not be associated with them. This was the fixed purpose of his soul; and this was then, as it is now, an evidence of true piety. This, moreover, is an *indispensable* evidence of piety. He who *does* thus sit with the wicked; who makes them his companions and friends; who unites with them in their plans and purposes; who partakes with them in their peculiar amusements and pursuits, cannot possibly be a pious man. If he mingles with such men at all, it must be only as demanded by the necessities of social or civil life; or in the transactions of business; or for the purpose of doing them good. If it is for other purposes, if he makes them his chosen companions and friends, he gives the clearest evidence that his heart is with them, and that it is *not* with God.

6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* The psalmist here refers, as another evidence of his piety, to the fact that it was a ruling purpose of his life to be pure, to worship and serve his Maker in purity. He had stated that he had no sympathy with the wicked, and that he did not make them his companions; he now states what his preferences were, and where his heart was to be found. He had loved, and he still loved the worship of God; he delighted in the pure service of the Most High. Washing the hands is an emblem of purity. So Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 24) "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Comp. Deut. xxi. 6, 7. The word rendered *innocency* means properly *cleanness, purity;* and perhaps the allusion here is to water that is perfectly pure. The sense of the passage is, that he would endeavour to make himself pure, and would thus worship God. He would not come, practising iniquity, or cherishing sin in his heart. He would banish all from his mind and heart and life that was wrong, and would come with true love to God, and with the spirit of a sincere worshipper. ¶ *So will I compass thine altar, O* LORD. In this manner, and with this spirit, I will worship thee. The word *compass* may either mean that he would *embrace* it by throwing his arms around it, or that he would *go round* it with others in a solemn procession in worship. The idea is, that he would come to the altar of God with his offering in sincerity and truth. It was to himself one evidence of sincere piety that he so purposed in his heart, or that he was conscious of a desire to worship God in purity and truth. This desire is always an indication of true piety.

7. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving.* Literally, "that I may cause to be heard;" that is, that I may make known to others. The

voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

8 LORD, I have loved [a] the habitation of thy house, and the

[a] Ps. xxvii. 4; lxxxiv. 1, 2.
[1] *of the tabernacle of thine honour.*

place where [1] thine honour dwelleth.

9 [2] Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with [3] bloody men;

[2] Or, *take not away.* [3] *men of blood.*

idea is, that he would make known to others what he had learned of God; or that he would make known to them the delights of his service, and seek to win them to his worship. This he would do with a thankful remembrance of the favours which he had himself enjoyed, or as an expression of his gratitude for the mercies which had been conferred on him. As expressive of his gratitude to God, he would endeavour to win others also to his service. ¶ *And tell of all thy wondrous works.* The wonderful things which thou hast done,—thy works of creation, providence, and salvation. His own mind was deeply impressed with the greatness of God's works, and he would desire to make the Divine doings known as far as possible in the world. Comp. Ps. xxii. 22; lxvi. 16; cxlv. 5, 6. This is always one of the evidences of true piety. They who have been impressed properly with a sense of the greatness and goodness of God; they who have experienced his pardoning mercy and forgiving grace, desire always to make these things known to others, and to invite them also to partake of the mercies connected with the Divine favour. Comp. John i. 45.

8. LORD, *I have loved the habitation of thy house.* I have loved to dwell in thy house. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6. The psalmist often refers to his delight in the house of God,—the place of public worship; his love to be there united with the people of God in the solemn services of religion. Comp. Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 4, 10; xxvii. 4. ¶ *And the place where thine honour dwelleth.* Marg., *the tabernacle of thine honour.* This *might* indeed refer to the tabernacle; and the idea might be that he loved the place where that rested in its wanderings. But the more correct meaning is, that he loved the place where the "glory" of God—the Shekinah—the symbol of his presence—rested; that is, the place where God was pleased to manifest himself, and where he dwelt. Wherever that was, he found pleasure in being there; and that he *did* thus love the place where God manifested himself, was to his own mind an evidence of true piety. It *is* always an evidence of piety, for there can be no true religion where the soul does *not* find pleasure in the worship of God. A man who does *not* delight in such a service here, is not prepared for heaven, where God eternally dwells.

9. *Gather not my soul with sinners.* Marg., *take not away.* The word rendered *gather*, means properly to *collect;* to *gather*,—as fruits, Exod. xxiii. 10; ears of grain, Ruth ii. 7; money, 2 Kings xxii. 4. There is the idea of assembling together, or collecting; and the meaning here is, that he desired not to be united with wicked men, or to be regarded as one of their number. It does not refer particularly, as I apprehend, to death, as if he prayed that he might not be cut down with wicked men; but it has a more general meaning,—that he did not wish either in this life, in death, or in the future world, to be united with the wicked. He desired that his lot might be with those who feared God, and not with those who were his foes. He was united with those who feared God now; he desired that he might be united with them for ever. This is expressive of true religion; and this prayer must go forth really from every pious heart. They who truly love God must desire that their lot should be with his friends, alike in this world and in the world to come, however poor, and humble, and despised they may be;—not with sinners, however prosperous, or honoured, or

10 In whose hands *is* mischief, and their right hand is [1] full of bribes.

11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

12 My foot [b] standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord.

[1] *filled with.* [b] Ps. xl. 2.

gay, or rich, they may be. The word *my soul* here is synonymous with *me;* and the meaning is, he desired that *he himself* should not thus be gathered with sinners. It is the same word which is commonly rendered *life.* ¶ *Nor my life.* This word properly means *life;* and the prayer is, that his life might not be taken away or destroyed with that class of men. He did not wish to be associated with them when he died or was dead. He had preferred the society of the righteous; and he prayed that he might die as he had lived, united in feeling and in destiny with those who feared and loved God. ¶ *With bloody men.* Marg., *men of blood.* Men who shed blood—robbers, murderers,—a term used to denote the wicked. See Notes on Ps. v. 6.

10. *In whose hands* is *mischief.* The word here rendered *mischief,* means properly *purpose, counsel, plan;* then, an evil purpose, *mischief, wickedness, crime.* The idea is, either that they intended to do mischief, and that they employed their hands to accomplish it, or that the fruit or result of their wicked plans was in their hands; that is, they had in their possession what they had secured by robbery, or plunder, or dishonesty. ¶ *And their right hand is full of bribes.* Marg., *filled with.* The word here rendered *bribes* means properly a *gift,* or *present;* and then, a gift offered to a judge to procure an unjust sentence, 2 Kings xvi. 8; Prov. vi. 35; Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. x. 17. The general meaning is that he did not desire to be associated either with men who openly committed crime, or with those who could be corrupted in the administration of justice.

11. *But as for me.* The Hebrew is, "and I." But there is evidently a contrast between what he purposed to do, and the course of life pursued by those to whom he had just referred; and this is correctly expressed in our translation, "*But* as for me." It is a statement of his profession of piety, and of his purpose to lead a religious life. He *meant*—he solemnly *purposed*—to lead a holy life. ¶ *I will walk.* I will live a life of integrity. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. ¶ *In mine integrity.* Heb., in my *perfection.* See Notes on Ps. vii. 8; Job i. 1. The idea is that he intended to live a life of uprightness. ¶ *Redeem me.* From sin; from trouble; from death. The word *redeem* here implies that he did not claim to be *perfect* in the most absolute sense, even when he expressed his purpose to lead a life of integrity. He felt still that he was a sinner, and that he was dependent on redeeming mercy for salvation. On the word *redeem,* see Notes on Ps. xxv. 22; Isa. xxix. 22. Comp. Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. ¶ *And be merciful to me.* In connexion with redemption. The prayer for mercy is always an acknowledgment of guilt, and the plea here shows that with all his purposes of holy living, and notwithstanding all that he had referred to in the psalm as evidence of uprightness of intention and integrity of life, he still felt that he was a sinner, and that his only hope was in the mercy of God.

12. *My foot standeth in an even place.* The word rendered *even place*—מִישׁוֹר, *mishor*—means properly *righteousness,* or *justice;* then, *evenness,* a *level region,* a *plain:* Isa. xl. 4; xlii. 16. De Wette renders it, "in a right path." The idea is, either that he was standing now on smooth and level ground; or that he was walking in a straight path, in contradistinction from the crooked and perverse ways of the wicked;

that is, he had found now a level road where he might walk securely. The latter is probably the true meaning. He had been anxious about his condition. He had been examining the evidences of his piety. He had had doubts and fears. He had seen much to apprehend, and he had appealed to God to determine the question on which he was so anxious,—whether his hope was built on a solid foundation. His path in these inquiries, and while his mind was thus troubled, was like a journey over a rough and dangerous road—a road of hills and vallies—of rocks and ravines. Now he had found a smooth and safe path. The way was level. He felt secure; and he walked calmly and safely along, as a traveller does who has got over dangerous passes and who feels that he is on level ground. The idea is, that his doubts had been dissipated, and he now felt that his evidences of piety were well founded, and that he was truly a child of God. ¶ *In the congregations will I bless the* LORD. In the assemblies of his people will I praise him. Comp. Ps. xxii. 22. The meaning is, that in the great assembly he would offer special praise that God had resolved his doubts, and had given him so clear evidence that he was truly his friend. He would go to the house of God, and there render him public praise that he had been able to find the evidence which he desired. No act could be more appropriate than such an act of praise, for there is nothing for which we should render more hearty thanks than for any evidence that we are truly the friends of God, and have a well-founded hope of heaven. The whole psalm should lead us carefully to examine the evidences of our piety; to bring before God all that we rely on as proof that we are his friends; and to pray that he will enable us to examine it aright; and, when the result is, as it was in the case of the psalmist,—when we can feel that we have reached a level place and found a smooth path, then we should go, as he did, and offer hearty thanks to God that we *have* reason to believe we are his children and are heirs of salvation.

PSALM XXVII.

This purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to think that the inscription is not correct. But the occasion on which it was composed is wholly unknown. There is no intimation of this in the title, and there are no historical marks in the psalm which would enable us to determine this. There were not a few occasions in the life of David when all that is expressed in the psalm *might* have been said by him,—as there are many occasions, in the lives of all, to which the sentiments of the psalm would be appropriate. The Septuagint version has the title, "A Psalm of David before his anointing," --- *πρὸ τοῦ χρισθῆναι*. Grotius supposes the occasion to have been the anointing in Hebron, when he was first inaugurated as king, 2 Sam. ii. 4. Rosenmüller refers it to the last anointing, 2 Sam. v. 3. Many of the Jewish expositors refer the psalm to the last days of David, when he was delivered from death by the intervention of Abishai, 2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17. But there is no internal evidence that the psalm was composed on either of these occasions, and it is now impossible to ascertain the time or the circumstances of its composition.

The general object of the psalm is to excite in others confidence in God from the experience which the psalmist had of His merciful interposition in times of trouble and danger, ver. 14. The author of the psalm had had some marked evidence of the Divine favour and protection in seasons of peril and sorrow (ver. 1); and he makes use of this as an argument running through the psalm to lead others to repose on God in similar circumstances. It may have been that at the time of composing the psalm he was still surrounded by enemies, and exposed to danger; but if so, he expresses the utmost confidence in God, and gratefully refers to His past interposition in similar circumstances as full proof that all his interests would be secure.

The contents of the psalm are,—

I. An expression of confidence in God as derived from his own experience of His merciful interposition in times of danger, vers. 1-3. He had been in peril at some time which is not specified, and had been rescued; and from this gracious

PSALM XXVII.

A Psalm of David.

THE LORD [c] is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, [1] came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

c Mic. vii. 7, 8.

1 *approached against.*

interposition he argues that it would be safe always to trust in God.

II. The expression of a desire to dwell always where God is; to see his beauty there; to inquire further after him; to offer sacrifices; and to praise him, vers. 4–6. The psalmist had seen so much of God that he desired to see yet more; he had had such experience of his favour that he wished always to be with him; he had found so much happiness in God that he believed that all his happiness was to be found in His presence, and in His service.

III. An earnest prayer that God would hear him; that he would grant his requests; that he would save him from all his enemies; that he would lead him in a plain path, vers. 7–12. This is founded partly on his own past experience, that when God had commanded him to seek his face he had obeyed (ver. 8), and it is connected with the fullest assurance that God would protect him, even should he be forsaken by father and mother (ver. 10).

IV. The conclusion—the exhortation to wait on the Lord, vers. 13, 14. This exhortation is derived from his own experience. He says that he himself would have fainted if he had not confided in God and hoped in His mercy, when there was no other hope (ver. 13); and, in view of that experience, he encourages all others to put their trust in Him (ver. 14).

1. *The* LORD *is my light.* He is to me the source of light. That is, he guides and leads me. Darkness is the emblem of distress, trouble, perplexity, and sorrow; light is the emblem of the opposite of these. God furnished him such light that these troubles disappeared, and his way was bright and happy. ¶ *And my salvation.* That is, he saves or delivers me. ¶ *Whom shall I fear?* Comp. Rom. viii. 31. If God is on our side, or is for us, we can have no apprehension of danger. He is abundantly able to protect us, and we may confidently trust in him. No one needs any better security against the objects of fear or dread than the conviction that God is his friend. ¶ *The* LORD *is the strength of my life.* The support of my life. Or, in other words, he keeps me alive. In itself life is feeble, and is easily crushed out by trouble and sorrow; but as long as *God* is its strength, there is nothing to fear. ¶ *Of whom shall I be afraid?* No one has power to take life away while he defends me. God is to those who put their trust in him a stronghold or fortress, and they are safe.

2. *When the wicked,* even *mine enemies and my foes, came upon me.* This refers, doubtless, to some particular period of his past life when he was in very great danger, and when God interposed to save him. The margin here is, *approached against me.* The literal rendering would be, "in the drawing near against me of the wicked to eat up my flesh." The reference is to some period when they purposed an attack on him, and when he was in imminent danger from such a threatened attack. ¶ *To eat up my flesh.* As if they would eat me up. That is, they came upon me like ravening wolves, or hungry lions. We are not to suppose that they literally purposed to eat up his flesh, or that they were cannibals; but the comparison is one that is drawn from the fierceness of wild beasts rushing on their prey. Comp. Ps. xiv. 4. ¶ *They stumbled and fell.* They were overthrown. They failed in their purpose. Either they were thrown into a panic by a false fear, or they were overthrown in battle. The language would be rather applicable to the former, as if by some alarm they were thrown into consternation. Either they differed

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this *will* I *be* confident.

4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell [d] in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold [e] the [1] beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

d Ps. lxv. 4. *e* Ps. lxiii. 2.

[1] Or, *delight.*

among themselves and became confused, or God threw obstacles in their way and they were driven back. The general idea is, that *God* had interposed in some way to prevent the execution of their purposes.

3. *Though an host.* Though an *army;* that is, any army, or any number of men in battle array. The past interposition of God in similar times of trouble and danger was to him a sufficient security that he had nothing to fear. ¶ *Should encamp against me.* In battle array, or prepared for battle. ¶ *My heart shall not fear.* He would not tremble; he would not feel that there was anything of which to be afraid. God had shown himself superior to the power of hostile armies, and the psalmist felt assured that he might confide in him. ¶ *Though war should rise against me.* Though it should be proclaimed, and though all preparation should be made for it, I will not be afraid. ¶ *In this* will *I* be *confident.* In such a case, in such an extremity or emergency, I would calmly trust in God. He would apprehend no danger, for he had seen that the Lord could deliver him.

4. *One* thing *have I desired of the* LORD. One main object; one thing that I have specially desired; one thing which has been the object of my constant wish. This ruling desire of his heart the psalmist has more than once adverted to in the previous psalms (comp. Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvi. 8); and he frequently refers to it in the subsequent psalms. ¶ *That will I seek after.* As the leading object of my life; as the thing which I most earnestly desire. ¶ *That I may dwell in the house of the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6. ¶ *All the days of my life.* Constantly; to the end. Though engaged in other things, and though there were other objects of interest in the world, yet he felt that it would be supreme felicity on earth to dwell always in the temple of God, and to be employed in its sacred services, preparatory to an eternal residence in the temple above. To him the service of God on earth was not burdensome, nor did he anticipate that he would ever become weary of praising his Maker. How can a man be prepared for an eternal heaven who finds the worship of God on earth irksome and tedious? ¶ *To behold the beauty of the* LORD. Marg., *the delight.* The word rendered *beauty* here—נֹעַם, *noam*—means properly *pleasantness;* then, *beauty, splendour;* then, *grace, favour.* The reference here is to the beauty or loveliness of the Divine character as it was particularly manifested in the public worship of God, or by those symbols which in the ancient worship were designed to make that character known. In the tabernacle and in the temple there was a manifestation of the character of God not seen elsewhere. The whole worship was adapted to set forth his greatness, his glory, and his grace. Great truths were brought before the mind, fitted to elevate, to comfort, and to sanctify the soul; and it was in the contemplation of those truths that the psalmist sought to elevate and purify his own mind, and to sustain himself in the troubles and perplexities of life. Comp. Ps. lxxiii. 15—17. ¶ *And to inquire in his temple.* Or tabernacle. The *word* here used would be applicable to either, considered as the *palace* or the residence of Jehovah. As the temple was not, however, built at

5 For *f* in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock.

f Isa. iv. 5, 6.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of [1] joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

[1] *shouting.*

this time, the word must here be understood to refer to the tabernacle. See Notes on Ps. v. 7. The meaning of the passage is, that he would wish to seek instruction, or to obtain light on the great questions pertaining to God, and that he looked for this light in the place where God was worshipped, and by means of the views which that worship was adapted to convey to the mind. In a manner still more direct and full may we now hope to obtain just views of God by attendance on his worship. The Christian sanctuary — the place of public worship—is the place where, if anywhere on earth, we may hope to have our minds enlightened; our perplexities removed; our hearts comforted and sanctified, by right views of God.

5. *For in the time of trouble.* When I am surrounded by dangers, or when affliction comes upon me. ¶ *He shall hide me.* The word here used means to hide; to secrete; and then, to defend or protect. It would properly be applied to one who had fled from oppression, or from any impending evil, and who should be *secreted* in a house or cavern, and thus rendered safe from pursuers, or from the threatening evil. ¶ *In his pavilion.* The word *pavilion* means *tent* or *tabernacle.* The Hebrew word —סֻכָּה, *sukkah*—means properly a booth, hut, or cot formed of green branches interwoven: Jonah iv. 5; Job xxvii. 18; see Notes on Isa. iv. 6. Then it is applied to tents made of skins: Lev. xxiii. 43; 2 Sam. xi. 11. It thus is used to denote the tabernacle, considered as the dwelling-place of God on earth, and the meaning here is, that God would hide him as it were in his own dwelling; he would admit him near to himself; he would take care that he should be protected as if he were one of his own family;—as a man protects those whom he admits to his own abode. ¶ *In the secret of his tabernacle.* In the most retired and private part of his dwelling. He would not merely admit him to his premises; not only to the vestibule of his house; not only to the open court, or to the parts of his house frequented by the rest of his family; but he would admit him to the private apartments—the place to which he himself withdrew to be alone, and where no stranger, and not even one of the family, would venture to intrude. Nothing could more certainly denote friendship; nothing could more certainly make protection sure, than thus to be taken into the private apartment where the master of a family was accustomed himself to withdraw, that he might be alone; and nothing, therefore, can more beautifully describe the protection which God will give to his friends than the idea of thus admitting them to the secret apartments of his own dwelling-place. ¶ *He shall set me up upon a rock.* A place where I shall be secure; a place inaccessible to my enemies. Comp. Ps. xviii. 1, 2; xix. 14 (*margin*); lxi. 2; lxxi. 3. The meaning is, that he would be *safe* from all his enemies.

6. *And now shall mine head.* Now shall *I* be exalted. So we say that in affliction a man bows down his head; in prosperity he lifts it up. This verse expresses the confident expectation that he would be enabled to triumph over all his foes, and a firm purpose on his part, as the result of this, to offer sacrifices of praise to his great deliverer. ¶ *Above mine enemies round about me.* All my enemies, though they seem even to encompass

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 [1] *When thou saidst,* Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

[1] Or, *My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face.*

me on every side. ¶ *Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle.* In his tent, his dwelling-place: referring here, undoubtedly, to *the tabernacle* as a place where God was worshipped. ¶ *Sacrifices of joy.* Marg., as in the Hebrew, *of shouting.* That is, he would offer sacrifices accompanied with loud sounds of praise and thanksgiving. There is nothing wrong in shouting for joy when a man is delivered from imminent danger, nothing wrong in doing so when he feels that he is rescued from the peril of eternal ruin. ¶ *I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the* LORD. This language is that which comes from a full heart. He is not contented with saying merely that he would *sing.* He repeats the idea; he dwells upon it. With a heart overflowing with gratitude he would go and give utterance to his joy. He would repeat, and dwell upon, the language of thanksgiving.

7. *Hear, O* LORD, when *I cry with my voice.* This earnest prayer seems to have been prompted by a returning sense of danger. He had had assurance of the Divine favour. He had found God ready to help him. He did not doubt but that he would aid him; yet all this did not prevent his calling upon him for the aid which he needed, but rather stimulated him to do it. With all the deep-felt conviction of his heart that God was ready and willing to assist him, he still felt that he had no reason to hope for his aid unless he called upon him. The phrase "when I cry with my voice" refers to the fact that he prayed audibly or aloud. It was not mental prayer, but that which found expression in the language of earnest entreaty.

8. When thou saidst, *Seek ye my face,* etc. Marg., *My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face.* The literal translation would be, "To Thee hath said my heart, Seek ye my face; thy face, O Lord, will I seek." De Wette thus expresses the idea, "Of thee my heart thinks (in regard to the command to seek thy face), thy face, Lord, I will seek." Our translators have given the correct meaning, though the original is quite obscure. The passage is designed to denote the state of the mind, or the disposition, in regard to the commands of God. The command or precept was to seek God. The prompt purpose of the mind or heart of the psalmist was, that he would do it. He *immediately* complied with that command, as it was a principle of his life—one of the steady promptings of his heart—that he would do this. The heart asked no excuse; pleaded for no delay; desired no reason for not complying with the command, but at once assented to the propriety of the law, and resolved to obey. This related undoubtedly at first to prayer, but the *principle* is applicable to all the commands of God. It is the prompting of a pious heart immediately and always to obey the voice of God, no matter what his command is, and no matter what sacrifice may be required in obeying it.

9. *Hide not thy face* far *from me.* Comp. Notes on Ps. iv. 6. To "hide the face" is to turn it away with displeasure, as if we would not look on one who has offended us. The favour of God is often expressed by "lifting the light of his countenance" upon any one,—looking complacently or *pleasedly* upon him. The reverse of this is expressed by hiding the face, or by turning it away. The word "*far*" introduced by the translators does not aid the sense of the passage.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will [1] take me up.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a [2] plain path, because of [3] mine enemies.

[1] *gather me*, Isa. xl. 11.

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

[2] *way of plainness*, Ps. xxvi. 12.
[3] *those which observe me*, Ps. v. 8.

¶ *Put not thy servant away in anger.* Do not turn me off, or put me away in displeasure. We turn one away, or do not admit him into our presence, with whom we are displeased. The psalmist prayed that he might have free access to God as a friend. ¶ *Thou hast been my help.* In days that are past. This he urges as a reason why God should still befriend him. The fact that he *had* shown mercy to him, that he had treated him as a friend, is urged as a reason why he should now hear his prayers, and show him mercy. ¶ *Leave me not.* Do not abandon me. This is still a proper ground of pleading with God. We may refer to all his former mercies towards us; we may make mention of those mercies as a reason why he should now interpose and save us. We may, so to speak, *remind* him of his former favours and friendship, and may plead with him that he will complete what he has begun, and that, having once admitted us to his favour, he will never leave or forsake us.

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me.* If they should do it. The psalmist supposes it possible that this might occur. It does occur, though very rarely; but the psalmist means to say that the love of God is stronger and more certain than even that of a father or mother, since he will *never* forsake his people. Though every other tie that binds heart to heart should dissolve, this will remain; though a case might occur in which we could not be sure of the love that naturally springs out of the most tender earthly relationships, yet we can always confide in his love. See Notes on Isa. xlix. 15. ¶ *Then the* LORD *will take me up.* Marg., *will gather me.* The margin expresses the usual meaning of the word. It is sometimes used as referring to the hospitable reception of strangers or wanderers into one's house: Judges xix. 15, 18; Joshua xx. 4. The meaning here is, that if he should be forsaken by his nearest earthly friends, and be an outcast and a wanderer, so that no one on earth would take him in, the Lord would then receive him.

11. *Teach me thy way, O* LORD. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 4, 5. ¶ *And lead me in a plain path.* Marg., *a way of plainness.* That is, a straight or smooth path. In other words, he prayed that he might be enabled to act wisely and right; he desired that God would teach him what he should do. ¶ *Because of mine enemies.* Marg., *those which observe me.* The translation in the text expresses the true sense. The word which is used is derived from a verb that signifies *to twist; to twist together;* and then, to oppress; to treat as an enemy. Here it refers to those who would treat him harshly or cruelly; and he prays that God would show him how to act in view of the fact that he was surrounded by such foes. They were harsh and cruel; they sought to overcome him; they laid snares for him. He knew not how to act so as to escape from them, and he therefore pleads that God would instruct and guide him.

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies.* Let them not accomplish their desires in regard to me; let them not be able to carry out their purposes. The word here rendered *will* means properly *soul*, but it is here used evidently to denote *wish* or *desire.* Comp. Ps. xxxv. 25. ¶ *For false witnesses are risen up against me.* Men who would lay false

13 *I had fainted,* unless I had believed to [g] see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

[g] Ps. cxviii. 17, 18.

14 Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

charges against him, or who would wrongfully accuse him. They charged him with crimes which he never committed, and they persecuted him as if he were guilty of what they alleged against him. ¶ *And such as breathe out cruelty.* That is, they meditate violence or cruel treatment. They are intent on this; they pant for it. Saul of Tarsus thus "*breathed out* threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." See Notes on Acts ix. 1.

13. I had fainted, *unless I had believed.* The words "I had fainted" are supplied by the translators, but they undoubtedly express the true sense of the passage. The psalmist refers to the state of mind produced by the efforts of his enemies to destroy him, as mentioned in ver. 12. So numerous, mighty, and formidable were they, that he says his only support was his faith in God; his belief that he would yet be permitted to see the goodness of God upon the earth. In this time of perplexity and trial he *had* confidence in God, and believed that He would uphold him, and would permit him to see the evidences of His goodness and mercy while yet on the earth. What was the *ground* of this confidence he does not say, but he had the fullest belief that this would be so. He may have had some special assurance of it, or he may have had a deep internal conviction of it, sufficient to calm his mind; but whatever was the source of this confidence it was that which sustained him. A similar state of feeling is indicated in the remarkable passage in Job, ch. xix. 25–27. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *To see the goodness of the* LORD *in the land of the living.* That is, that I should *live,* and yet see and enjoy the tokens of the Divine favour here upon the earth.

14. *Wait on the* LORD. This is the sum of all the instruction in the psalm; the main lesson which the psalm is designed to convey. The object is to induce others, from the experience of the psalmist, to trust in the Lord; to rely upon him; to come to him in trouble and danger; to wait for his interposition when all other resources fail. Comp. Ps. xxv. 3. ¶ *Be of good courage.* The Hebrew word here means, *be strong.* That is, do not faint. Do not be dismayed. Still hope and trust in the Lord. ¶ *He shall strengthen thine heart.* He will strengthen *thee.* He will enable you to perform your duties, and to triumph over your enemies. See Notes on Isa. xl. 31. ¶ *Wait, I say, on the* LORD. Repeating an idea with which the heart was full; a lesson resulting from his own rich experience. He dwells upon it as a lesson which he would fix deeply in the mind, that in all times of danger and difficulty, instead of despondency, instead of sinking down in despair, instead of giving up all effort, we should go forward in the discharge of duty, putting our trust solely in the Lord.

PSALM XXVIII.

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David;" and there is no reason for doubting the correctness of the inscription. But, as in some of the previous psalms, neither the title nor the contents contain any intimation as to the time or the circumstances of its composition.

It has, in some respects, a strong resemblance to Ps. xxvi. The leading idea in this, as in that, is the strong affection of the author for those who feared and loved God; his strong desire to be associated with them in character and destiny; his earnest wish that he might not be drawn away from them, and that his lot might not be with the wicked. It would seem from the psalm itself, especially from ver. 3, that it was

PSALM XXVIII.

A Psalm of David.

UNTO thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent [1] to me: lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when [h] I lift up my hands toward [2] thy holy oracle.

[1] *from.* [h] Ps. cxxxviii. 2.
[2] Or, *the oracle of thy sanctuary.*

composed when its author was under some powerful temptation from the wicked, or when there were strong allurements offered by them which tended to lead him into the society of those who were strangers to God; and, under this temptation, he urges this earnest prayer, and seeks to bring before his own mind considerations why he should *not* yield to these influences.

The contents of the psalm, therefore, may be presented in the following analysis:—

I. The consciousness of danger so pressing upon him as to lead him to break out in an earnest cry to God, vers. 1, 2.

II. The source of his anxiety or his danger; and his earnest prayer that he might not be left to the powerful temptation, and be drawn into the society of the wicked, ver. 3.

III. Considerations which occurred to the mind of the psalmist himself why he should *not* yield to the temptation, or why he should *not* be associated with the wicked. These considerations are stated in vers. 3-5. They are drawn from the character and the certain destiny of the wicked.

IV. A sense of relief, or a feeling that God *had* answered his prayer, and that he was safe from the danger, vers. 6, 7.

The psalm is peculiarly appropriate to those who are in danger of being led away by the acts of the ungodly,—or who are under strong temptations to be associated with the gay, the sensual, and the worldly,—or to whom strong inducements are offered to mingle in their pleasures, their vices, and their follies. They who before their conversion were the companions of the ungodly; they who were devoted to guilty pleasures but have been rescued from them; they who have contracted habits of intemperance or sensuality in the society of the dissolute, and who feel the power of the habit returning upon them, and are invited by their former associates to join them again,—are in the condition contemplated in the psalm, and will find its sentiments appropriate to their experience.

1 *Unto thee will I cry.* That is, under the consciousness of the danger to which I am exposed—the danger of being drawn away into the society of the wicked. In such circumstances his reliance was not on his own strength; or on his own resolutions; on his own heart; or on his fellowmen. He felt that he was safe only in God, and he appeals to Him, therefore, in this earnest manner, to save him. ¶ *O* LORD *my rock.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *Be not silent to me.* Marg., *from me.* So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one who will not speak to us, or who will not attend to us. We pray, and we look for an *answer* to our prayers, or, as it were, we expect God to *speak* to us; to utter words of kindness; to assure us of his favour; to declare our sins forgiven. ¶ *Lest,* if *thou be silent to me.* If thou dost not answer my supplications. ¶ *I become like unto them that go down into the pit.* Like those who die; or, lest I be crushed by anxiety and distress, and die. The word *pit* here refers to the grave. So it is used in Ps. xxx. 3; lxxxviii. 4; Isa. xxxviii. 18; xiv. 15, 19. The meaning is, that if he did not obtain help from God he despaired of life. His troubles would overwhelm and crush him. He could not bear up under them.

2. *Hear the voice of my supplications.* It was not mental prayer which he offered; it was a petition uttered audibly. ¶ *When I lift up my hands.* To lift up the hands denotes supplication, as this was a common attitude in prayer. See Notes on 1 Tim. ii. 8. ¶ *Toward thy holy oracle.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *toward the oracle of thy holiness.* The word *oracle* as used here denotes the place where the answer to prayer is given.

3 Draw [i] me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief *is* in their hearts.

[i] Ps. cxxv. 5.

The Hebrew word—דְּבִיר, *debir*—means properly the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle or the temple, the place where God was supposed to reside, and where he gave responses to the prayers of his people:—the same place which is elsewhere called the Holy of Holies. See Notes on Heb. ix. 3—14. The Hebrew word is found only here and in 1 Kings vi. 5, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31; vii. 49; viii. 6, 8; 2 Chron. iii. 16; iv. 20; v. 7, 9. The idea here is that he who prayed stretched out his hands toward that sacred place where God was supposed to dwell. So we stretch out our hands towards heaven—the sacred dwelling-place of God. Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 7. The Hebrew word is probably derived from the verb to *speak;* and, according to this derivation, the idea is that God spake to his people; that he *communed* with them; that he answered their prayers from that sacred recess,—his peculiar dwelling-place. See Ex. xxv. 22; Num. vii. 89.

3. *Draw me not away with the wicked.* See Notes on Ps. xxvi. 9. The prayer here, as well as the prayer in Ps. xxvi. 9, expresses a strong desire *not* to be united with wicked men in feeling or in destiny—in life or in death—on earth or in the future world. The reason of the prayer seems to have been that the psalmist, being at this time under a strong temptation to associate with wicked persons, and feeling the force of the temptation, was apprehensive that he should be left to *yield* to it, and to become associated with them. Deeply conscious of this danger, he earnestly prays that he may not be left to yield to the power of the temptation, and fall into sin. So the Saviour (Matt. vi. 13) has taught us to pray, "And lead us not into temptation." None who desire to serve God can be insensible to the propriety of this prayer. The temptations of the world are so strong; the amusements in which the world indulges are so brilliant and fascinating; they who invite us to partake of their pleasures are often so elevated in their social position, so refined in their manners, and so cultivated by education; the propensities of our hearts for such indulgences are so strong by nature; habits formed before our conversion are still so powerful; and the prospect of worldly advantages from compliance with the customs of those around us are often so great,—that we cannot but feel that it is proper for us to go to the throne of grace, and to plead earnestly with God that he will keep us and not suffer us to fall into the snare. Especially is this true of those who before they were converted had indulged in habits of intemperance, or in sensual pleasures of any kind, and who are invited by their old companions in sin again to unite with them in their pursuits. Here all the power of the former habit returns; here often there is a most fierce struggle between conscience and the old habit for victory; here especially those who are thus tempted need the grace of God to keep them; here there is special appropriateness in the prayer, "Draw me not away with the wicked." ¶ *And with the workers of iniquity.* In any form. With those who do evil. ¶ *Which speak peace to their neighbours.* Who speak words of friendliness. Who *seem* to be persuading you to do that which is for your good. Who put on plausible pretexts. They appear to be your friends; they profess to be so. They use flattering words while they tempt you to go astray. ¶ *But mischief* is *in their hearts.* They are secretly plotting your ruin. They wish to lead you into such courses of life in order that you may fall into sin; that you may dishonour religion; that you may disgrace your profession; or that they may in some way profit by your compliance with

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

5 Because [k] they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

7 The LORD *is* my strength

[k] Job xxxiv. 26, 27.

their counsels. So the wicked, under plausible pretences, would allure the good; so the corrupt would seduce the innocent; so the enemies of God would entice his friends, that they may bring shame and reproach upon the cause of religion.

4. *Give them according to their deeds.* Deal righteously with them. Recompense them as they deserve. ¶ *And according to the wickedness of their endeavours.* Their designs; their works; their plans. ¶ *Give them after the work of their hands.* Reward them according to what they *do.* ¶ *Render to them their desert.* A just recompense. This whole verse is a prayer that God would deal *justly* with them. There is no evidence that there is anything of vindictiveness or malice in the prayer. In itself considered, there is no impropriety in praying that *justice* may be done to the violators of law. See General Introduction, § 6.

5. *Because they regard not the works of the* LORD. What the Lord *does* in creation; in his providence; through his commands and laws; and by his Spirit. They do not find pleasure in his works; they do not give heed to the intimations of his will in his providential dealings; they do not listen to his commands; they do not yield to the influences of his Spirit. ¶ *Nor the operation of his hands.* What he is now doing. The sense is essentially the same as in the former member of the sentence. ¶ *He shall destroy them.* He will pull them down, instead of building them up. They expose themselves to his displeasure, and he will bring deserved punishment upon them. ¶ *And not build them up.* He will not favour them; he will not give them prosperity. Health, happiness, salvation are to be found only in conformity with the laws which God has ordained. Neither can be found in violating those laws, or in any other method than that which he has ordained. Sooner or later the violation of law, in regard to these things, and in regard to everything, must lead to calamity and ruin.

6. *Blessed* be *the* LORD, *because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.* This is one of those passages which frequently occur in the Psalms, when there has been an earnest and anxious prayer offered to God, and when the answer to the prayer seems to be immediate. The mind of the anxious and troubled pleader becomes calm; the promises of God are brought directly to the soul; the peace which was sought is obtained; and he who began the psalm with deep anxiety and trouble of mind, rejoices at the close of it in the evidences of the Divine favour and love. What thus happened to the psalmist frequently occurs now. The answer to prayer, so far as giving calmness and assurance to the mind is concerned, is often immediate. The troubled spirit becomes calm; and whatever may be the result in other respects, the heart is made peaceful and confiding, and feels the assurance that all will be well. It is sufficient for us to feel that God *hears* us; for if this is so, we have the assurance that all is right. In this sense, certainly, it is right to look for an immediate answer to our prayers. See Notes on Isa. lxv. 24; Dan. ix. 21.

7. *The* LORD *is my strength.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 1. ¶ *And my*

and my shield: my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him.

8 The LORD *is* [1] their strength,

[1] Or, *his.* [2] *strength of salvations.*

and he *is* the [2] saving strength of his anointed.

9 Save thy people, and bless [1] thine inheritance: [3] feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

[1] 1 Kings viii. 51, 53.
[3] Or, *rule*, Mic. vii. 14.

shield. See Notes on Ps. iii. 3. Comp. Ps. xxxiii. 20; lix. 11; lxxxiv. 9; lxxxix. 18; Gen. xv. 1. ¶ *My heart trusted in him.* I trusted or confided in him. See Ps. xiii. 5. ¶ *And I am helped.* I have found the assistance which I desired. ¶ *Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth.* I greatly rejoice. I am happy. He had found the assurance of the Divine favour which he desired, and his heart was glad. ¶ *And with my song will I praise him.* I will sing praises to him. Comp. Ps. xxii. 25.

8. *The* LORD is *their strength.* Marg., *his strength.* The Hebrew is, *their strength*, or *strength to them.* The allusion is to the people of God. The course of thought seems to be, that the psalmist, having derived in his own case assistance from God, or having found God a strength to him, his mind turns from this fact to the general idea that God was the strength of *all* who were in similar circumstances; or that all his people might confide in Him as he had done. ¶ *And he* is *the saving strength.* Marg., as in Heb., *strength of salvations.* That is, In him is found the strength which produces salvation. See Notes on Ps. xxvii. 1. ¶ *Of his anointed.* See Notes on Ps. ii. 2; xx. 6. The primary reference here is doubtless to the psalmist himself, as one who had been anointed or set apart to the kingly office; but the connexion shows that he intended to include *all* the people of God, as those whom he had consecrated or set apart to his service. See 1 Peter ii. 5, 9.

9. *Save thy people.* All thy people. The psalm appropriately closes with a prayer for all the people of God. The prayer is offered in view of the deliverance which the psalmist had himself experienced, and he prays that all the people of God might experience similar deliverance and mercy. ¶ *And bless thine inheritance.* Thy heritage; thy people. The Hebrew word properly means *taking possession of anything; occupation.* Then it comes to mean *possession; domain; estate*: Num. xviii. 21. Thus it is used as applied to the territory assigned to each tribe in the promised land: Josh. xiii. 23. Thus also it is applied to the people of Israel—the Jewish nation—as the *possession* or *property* of Jehovah; as a people whom he regarded as his own, and whom, as such, he protected: Deut. iv. 20; ix. 26, 29. In this place the people of God are thus spoken of as his peculiar possession or property on earth; as that which he regards as of most value to him; as that which belongs to him, or to which he has a claim; as that which cannot without injustice to him be alienated from him. ¶ *Feed them also.* Marg., *rule.* The Hebrew word refers to the care which a shepherd extends over his flock. See Psalm xxiii. 1, where the same word, under another form—*shepherd*—is used. The prayer is, that God would take the same care of his people that a shepherd takes of his flock. ¶ *And lift them up for ever.* The word here used may mean *sustain* them, or *support* them; but it more properly means *bear*, and would be best expressed by a reference to the fact that the shepherd carries the feeble, the young, and the sickly of his flock in his arms, or that he lifts them up when unable themselves to rise. See Notes on Isa. xl. 11; lxiii. 9. The word *for ever* here means simply *always*:—in all circumstances; at all times. In other words, the psalmist prays that God would *always* mani-

PSALM XXIX.

A Psalm of David.

GIVE [m] unto the LORD, O ye [l] mighty, give unto the LORD [n] glory and strength.

[m] Ps. xcvi. 7—9; 1 Chron. xvi. 28, 29.
[l] *sons of the mighty*, Ps. lxxxix. 6.
[n] Rev. v. 11—14.

fest himself as the friend and helper of his people, as He had done to him. It may be added here, that what the psalmist thus prays for *will* be done. God *will* save his people; he *will* bless his heritage; he *will* be to them a kind and faithful shepherd; he *will* sustain, comfort, uphold, and cherish them always,—in affliction; in temptation; in death; for ever. They have only to trust in him, and they will find him more kind and faithful than the most tender shepherd ever was to his flock.

PSALM XXIX.

This also purports to be a psalm of David, and it has every mark of being his production. It is designed to set forth the majesty and glory of God, especially as manifested in a thunder-storm, and was evidently composed in view of such an exhibition of his power and glory. It is one of the sublimest descriptions of a storm of thunder and lightning anywhere to be found. It is not possible to ascertain the particular occasion on which it was composed, nor is it necessary to do this in order to enter into the spirit and to appreciate the beauty of the psalm. Occasions occur in every country which furnish an illustration of the psalm; and its meaning can be appreciated by all.

The psalm has a universal applicability. It may be regarded as having been designed to show what feelings men should have in a violent storm, when the thunder rolls over sea and land, and when the lightnings flash along the sky; the effects which should be produced amidst such scenes; the influence of religion in keeping the mind from alarm,—lifting up the soul in adoration of the great God,—and inspiring confidence in One who has power to control elements so fearful. Amidst all the terrors of the tempest the mind of the psalmist was calm. The effect of it was to lead him to confide in the power of God, and to fill his soul with adoring views of him. We need not dread the fury of the elements when we know that they are under the absolute control of a Being of infinite goodness, truth, mercy, and love. If these fearful elements raged without control; if they were independent of God; if they were restrained by no laws; if the thunder rolled and the lightning played by mere caprice, or under the dominion of chance, well might we tremble.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:—

I. The duty of ascribing praise and glory to God; of giving to him the glory due to his name; of worshipping him in the beauty of holiness, vers. 1, 2.

II. The description of the storm, vers. 3-9. The thunder is seven times spoken of as "the voice of the Lord" (comp. Rev. x. 3, "And when he had cried, *seven* thunders uttered their voices");—and some peculiar effect is referred to as resulting from the utterance of that voice. It is "upon the waters;" it is "powerful;" it is "full of majesty;" it "breaks the cedars;" it "divides the flames of fire;" it "shakes the wilderness;" it "makes the hinds to calve," and "discovereth the forests."

III. The impression that should be produced by the whole scene. The Lord presides over the floods; the Lord is king for ever; the Lord is able to give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace, vers. 10, 11. In *such* a God his people may put confidence; under the protection of One who can arm himself with such power, and who can control such elements, his people have nothing to fear; in contending with such a God—one who can sweep the earth with desolation,—who can direct the playing lightnings where he pleases,—who can cause his voice to echo over hills, and vales, and floods, over the sea and the land, producing dismay and consternation,—his enemies can have nothing to hope.

1. *Give unto the* LORD. Ascribe unto Jehovah; or, recognise him as entitled to what is here ascribed to him. The word cannot be understood, as it is commonly with us, to denote the imparting to another, or granting to another what he does not now possess—for God is always in posses-

2 Give unto the LORD the [1] glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in [2] the beauty [o] of holiness.

[1] *honour of his name.*
[2] Or, his *glorious sanctuary.*

3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the LORD *is* upon [3] many waters.

[o] Ps. xc. 17; 2 Chron. xx. 21. [3] Or, *great.*

sion of what is here ascribed to him. ¶ *O ye mighty.* Marg., as in Heb., *ye sons of the mighty.* The Hebrew word here used—אֵלִים— is the plural form of one of the names of God—אֵל. The word means properly *strong, mighty, a mighty one, a hero;* then, *strength, might, power;* and then it is applied to God as *the Mighty One,* the Almighty. (*Gesenius.*) In the plural form, the word means *mighty ones, heroes, gods:* Exod. xv. 11; xviii. 11; Dan. xi. 36. The phrase *sons of the mighty* is used only here and in Ps. lxxxix. 6. The allusion is undoubtedly to the angels as being in an eminent sense the sons of God, or of the mighty ones; and they are referred to here under that appellation as being themselves endowed with power or strength. Comp. Ps. ciii. 20, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength;" marg., *mighty in strength.* In view of the wonderful exhibitions of God's power in the storm—exhibitions far above the power of the most exalted of His creatures, the psalmist calls upon the angels, the most exalted of them, to acknowledge the existence of a power so much beyond their own. ¶ *Glory and strength.* Majesty and might. Acknowledge him as the God of glory; as endowed with power. That is, learn from the manifestations of the power evinced in the storm how great is the power and the glory of God.

2. *Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name.* Marg., *the honour of his name.* The honour of his name is that which is due to it, or which properly belongs to it. The *name* is put here, as it often is, for God himself; and the meaning is, "Ascribe to God the honour that is properly his due." This is a claim addressed to the angels; it is a claim certainly not less binding on men. It is practically a call on all creatures in the universe to ascribe due honour to God. ¶ *Worship the* LORD. This exhortation is made particularly in view of the manifestations of his power in the storm. The idea is, that one who is capable of putting forth such power as is displayed in a tempest, has a claim to adoration and praise. ¶ *In the beauty of holiness.* Marg., *in* his *glorious sanctuary.* The Hebrew phrase would properly mean *holy beauty.* Some have supposed that it means *in holy adorning,* or in such consecrated vestments as were worn by priests in the sacred services of the sanctuary, or when they came into the presence of Jehovah. So De Wette understands it. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to the state of the heart—the *internal* ornament—with which we should approach God,—to a holy and pure state of mind—that beauty or appropriateness of the soul which consists in holiness or purity. Of this the external clothing of the priesthood was itself but an emblem, and this is that which God desires in those who approach him in an act of worship. It may be added that there is no *beauty* like this; that there is no external comeliness, no charm of person or complexion, no adorning of costly robes, that can be compared with this. It is this which God seeks, and with this he will be pleased, whether under a less or more attractive external form; whether under rich and costly raiment, or under the plain and decent clothing of poverty.

3. *The voice of the* LORD. The voice of Jehovah. There can be no doubt that the expression here, which is seven times repeated in the psalm, "the voice of Jehovah," refers to thunder; and no one can fail to see the appropriateness of the expression. In heavy thunder it seems as if God

4 The voice of the LORD *is* [1] powerful; the voice of the LORD *is* [2] full of majesty.

[1] *in power.* [2] *in majesty.*

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

spake. It comes from above. It fills us with awe. We know, indeed, that thunder as well as the other phenomena in the world, is produced by what are called "natural causes;" that there is no miracle in thunder; and that really God does not *speak* any more in the thunder than he does in the sighing of the breeze or in the gurgling of the rivulet;—but (*a*) he *seems* more impressively to speak to men in the thunder; and (*b*) he may not improperly be regarded *as* speaking alike in the thunder, in the sighing of the breeze, *and* in the gurgling stream. In each and all of these ways God *is* addressing men; in each and all there *are* lessons of great value conveyed, as if by his own voice, respecting his own existence and character. Those which are addressed to us particularly in thunder, pertain to his power, his majesty, his greatness; to our own weakness, feebleness, dependence; to the ease with which he could take us away, and to the importance of being prepared to stand before such a God. ¶ Is *upon the waters.* The word "*is*" is supplied here by our translators. The whole passage might be read as an exclamation: *The voice of Jehovah upon the waters!* It is the utterance of one who is overpowered by a sudden clap of thunder. The mind is awed. God seems to speak; his voice is heard rolling over the waters. The psalm was most likely composed in view of the sea or a lake—not improbably in view of the Mediterranean, when a storm was passing over it. A thunder-storm is sublime anywhere, in mountain scenery or on the plains, on the land or on the ocean; but there are circumstances which give it peculiar grandeur at sea, when the thunder seems to *roll* along with nothing to check or break it, and when the sublimity is increased by the solitude which reigns everywhere on the ocean. ¶ *The God of glory.* The glorious God. See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 7–10. ¶ *The* LORD is *upon many waters.* Jehovah himself seems to be on the ocean. His voice is heard there, and he himself appears to be there. The margin here is, *great waters.* This would seem to imply that the psalm was composed in view of waters more extended than a lake or a river, and sustains the idea above expressed, that it was in view of the great waters which must have been so familiar to the mind of the sacred writer—the waters of the Mediterranean.

4. *The voice of the* LORD is *powerful.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *in power.* That is, is mighty; or, has strength. Allusion may be made to what seems to be the effect of thunder in prostrating trees, or tearing off their limbs, or it may be merely to the loud sound of the thunder. ¶ Is *full of majesty.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *in majesty.* That is, it is grand, sublime, overpowering.

5. *Breaketh the cedars.* The thunder prostrates the lofty trees of the forest. The psalmist speaks as things appeared, attributing, as was natural, and as was commonly done, that to the thunder which was really produced by the lightning. It is now fully known that the effect here referred to is not produced by thunder, but by the rapid passage of the electric fluid as it passes from the cloud to the earth. *That* power is so great as to rive the oak or the cedar; to twist off their limbs; to prostrate their lofty trunks to the ground. The psalmist speaks of thunder as accomplishing this, in the same way that the sacred writers and all men, even scientific men, commonly speak, as when we say, the sun rises and sets,—the stars rise and set, etc. Men who should undertake in all cases to speak with scientific accuracy, or in the strict language of science, would

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

7 The voice of the LORD [1] divideth the flames of fire.

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

[1] *cutteth out.*

be unintelligible to the mass of mankind; perhaps on most subjects they would soon cease to speak at all,—since they themselves would be in utter doubt as to what *is* scientific accuracy. Men who require that a revelation from God should always use language of strict scientific precision, really require that a revelation should anticipate by hundreds or thousands of years the discoveries of science, and use language which, when the revelation was given, would be unintelligible to the mass of mankind; nay, which would be always unintelligible to a large portion of the race,—since men ordinarily, however much the exact truths of science may be diffused, do not learn to use such exactness of speech. As long as men have occasion to speak on the subject at all they will probably continue to say that the sun rises and sets; that the grass grows; and that water runs. ¶ *Breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.* "Cedars are mentioned as the loftiest forest trees, and those of Lebanon as the loftiest of their species."—*Prof. Alexander.* The cedars of Lebanon are often referred to in the Scriptures as remarkable for their size and grandeur: 1 Kings iv. 33; v. 6; Ps. xcii. 12; Ezra iii. 7.

6. *He maketh them also to skip like a calf.* That is, the cedars of Lebanon. Comp. Ps. cxiv. 4, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Ps. lxviii. 16, "Why leap ye, ye high hills?" The meaning is plain. The lightning tore off the large branches, and uprooted the loftiest trees, so that they seemed to play and dance like calves in their gambols. Nothing could be more strikingly descriptive of *power.* ¶ *Lebanon and Sirion.* Sirion was the name by which Mount Hermon was known among the Sidonians: Deut. iii. 9, "Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion." It is a part of the great range of Anti-libanus. ¶ *Like a young unicorn.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on Ps. xxii. 21. The illustration would be the same if *any* young wild animal were referred to.

7. *Divideth the flames of fire.* Marg., *cutteth out.* The Hebrew word—חָצַב, *hhatzab* — means properly *to cut, to hew, to hew out;* as, for example, stones. The allusion here is undoubtedly to lightning; and the image is either that it seems to be cut out, or cut into tongues and streaks,—or, more probably, that the *clouds* seem to be cut or hewed so as to make openings or paths for the lightning. The eye is evidently fixed on the clouds, and on the sudden flash of lightning, as if the clouds had been *cleaved* or *opened* for the passage of it. The idea of the psalmist is that the "voice of the Lord," or the thunder, seems to cleave or open the clouds for the flames of fire to play amidst the tempest. Of course this language, as well as that which has been already noticed (ver. 5), must be taken as denoting what *appears* to the eye, and not as a scientific statement of the reality in the case. The rolling thunder not only shakes the cedars, and makes the lofty trees on Lebanon and Sirion skip like a calf or a young unicorn, but it rends asunder or cleaves the clouds, and *cuts out* paths for the flames of fire.

8. *Shaketh the wilderness.* Causes it to shake or to tremble. The word here used means properly to dance; to be whirled or twisted upon anything; to twist—as with pain—or, to writhe; and then, to tremble, to quake. The forests are made to tremble or quake in the fierceness of the storm,—referring still to what

9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds [1] to calve, and discovereth the forests: and [o] in his temple [2] doth every one speak of *his* glory.

10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; [p] yea, the LORD sitteth [q] King for ever.

[1] Or, *be in pain.* [2] Or, *every whit of it uttereth.*
[o] Ps. lxiii. 2. [p] Gen. viii. 1, 2. [q] Ps. ii. 6—9.

the thunder *seems* to do. ¶ *The wilderness of Kadesh.* As in referring (vers. 5, 6) to the effect of the storm on lofty trees, the psalmist had given poetic beauty to the description by *specifying* Lebanon and Sirion, so he here refers, for the same purpose, to a particular forest as illustrating the power of the tempest—to wit, the forest or wilderness of *Kadesh.* This wilderness or forest was on the south-eastern border of the Promised Land, towards Edom; and it is memorable as having been the place where the Israelites twice encamped with a view of entering Palestine from that point, but whence they were twice driven back again,—the first time in pursuance of the sentence that they should wander forty years in the wilderness,—and the second time, from the refusal of the king of Edom to allow them to pass through his territories. It was from Kadesh that the spies entered Palestine. See Num. xiii. 17, 26; xiv. 40–45; xxi. 1–3; Deut. i. 41–46; Judges i. 7. Kadesh was on the northern border of Edom, and not far from Mount Hor. See Robinson's Biblical Researches in Palestine, vol. ii. pp. 582, 610, 662; Kitto, Cyclo-Bib. Lit., art. *Kadesh;* and the Pictorial Bible on Num. xx. 1. There seems to have been nothing *special* in regard to this wilderness which led the author of the psalm to select it for his illustration, except that it was well known and commonly spoken of, and that it would thus suggest an image that would be familiar to the Israelites.

9. *The voice of the* LORD *maketh the hinds to calve.* The deer. The object of the psalmist here is to show the effects of the storm in producing consternation, especially on the weak and timid animals of the forest. The effect here adverted to is that of fear or consternation in bringing on the throes of parturition. Comp. Job xxxix. 1, 3. No one can doubt that the effect here described may occur in the violence of a tempest; and perhaps no image could more vividly describe the terrors of the storm than the consternation thus produced. The margin here is, *to be in pain.* The Hebrew means *to bring forth,* referring to the pains of parturition. ¶ *And discovereth the forests.* The word here used means *to strip off, to uncover;* and, as used here, it means to strip off the leaves of the forest; to make the trees bare—referring to an effect which is often produced by a violent storm. ¶ *And in his temple doth every one speak of* his *glory.* Marg., *every whit of it uttereth,* etc. The word here rendered *temple* does not refer in this place to the tabernacle, or to the temple at Jerusalem, but rather *to the world itself,* considered as the residence or dwelling-place of God. Perhaps the true translation would be, "And in his temple everything says, Glory!" That is, in the dwelling-place of God,—the world of nature,—the sky, the earth, the forests, the waters, everything in the storm, echoes *glory, glory!* All these things declare the glory of God; all these wonders—the voice of God upon the waters; the thunder; the crash of the trees upon the hills; the shaking of the wilderness; the universal consternation; the leaves stripped from the trees and flying in every direction,—all proclaim the majesty and glory of Jehovah.

10. *The* LORD *sitteth upon the flood.* God is enthroned upon the flood, or presides over it. The obvious meaning is, that God is enthroned upon the storm, or presides over that which produces such consternation. It is not undirected; it is not the result

11 The LORD will give strength [r] unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with [s] peace.

[r] Isa. xl. 29—31.

[s] Ps. lxxxv. 8, 10.

of chance or fate; it is not produced by mere physical laws; it is not without restraint—without a ruler—for Jehovah presides over all, and all this may be regarded as his throne. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 7–11. See also Ps. xcvii. 2. The word here used is commonly applied to the deluge in the time of Noah, but there would be an obvious unfitness in supposing here that the mind of the psalmist referred to that, or that the course of thought would be directed to that, and it is most natural, therefore, to suppose that the reference is to the floods above—the vast reservoirs of waters in the clouds, pouring down, amidst the fury of the tempest, floods of rain upon the earth. ¶ *The* LORD *sitteth King for ever.* This is an appropriate close of the entire description; this is a thought which tends to make the mind calm and confiding when the winds howl and the thunder rolls; this accords with the leading purpose of the psalm—the call on the sons of the mighty (ver. 1) to ascribe strength and glory to God. From all the terrors of the storm;—from all that is fearful, on the waters, in the forests, on the hills, when it would seem as if everything would be swept away,—the mind turns calmly to the thought that *God* is enthroned upon the clouds; that he presides over all that produces this wide-spread alarm and commotion, and that he *will* reign for ever and ever.

11. *The* LORD *will give strength unto his people.* This is a practical application of the sentiments of the psalm, or a conclusion which is fairly to be derived from the main thought in the psalm. The idea is, that the God who presides over the tempest and the storm, the God who has such power, and can produce such effects, is abundantly able to uphold his people, and to defend them. In other words, the application of such amazing power will be to protect his people, and to save them from danger. When we look on the rolling clouds in the tempest, when we hear the roaring of the thunder, and see the flashing of the lightning, when we hear the oak crash on the hills, and see the waves piled mountains high, if we feel that God presides over all, and that he controls all this with infinite ease, assuredly we have no occasion to doubt that he can protect us; no reason to fear that his strength cannot support us. ¶ *The* LORD *will bless his people with peace.* They have nothing to fear in the tempest and storm; nothing to fear from anything. He will bless them with peace *in* the tempest; he will bless them with peace through that power by which he controls the tempest. Let them, therefore, not fear in the storm, however fiercely it may rage; let them not be afraid in any of the troubles and trials of life. *In* the storm, and *in* those troubles and trials, he can make the mind calm; *beyond* those storms and those troubles he can give them eternal peace in a world where no "angry tempest blows."

PSALM XXX.

This is said to be "A Psalm or Song at the dedication of the house of David." There is no reason to call in question the correctness of this inscription, though it cannot be certain that it was prefixed by the author himself. The words of the title are found in the Hebrew, and it is to be presumed that they were affixed to the psalm by some one of the inspired writers.

It is clearly implied in the title, though not expressly affirmed, that David was the author of the psalm, for it is to be presumed that he would himself compose the hymn or song that was to be used at the dedication of his own dwelling. In fact, the title, as Rosenmüller has remarked, might not improperly be read, "A Psalm, a song of dedication of a house, of David," so that the words "A Psalm of David" might not improperly be regarded as united.

It is not absolutely certain what occasion is referred to in the psalm. Some have supposed that the tabernacle is meant; but the tabernacle was dedicated long before the time of David. Others, and among them several Jewish interpreters, have supposed that it was prepared in order to be sung either at the dedication of the temple which Solomon built, or the dedication of that which was erected after the return from the Babylonish captivity. Others have supposed that it was intended to be used at the dedication of the house or palace which David built for himself on Mount Zion, 2 Sam. v. 11. It was usual for the Hebrews to "dedicate" a house when it was finished; that is, to devote it in a solemn manner to God, probably with appropriate religious exercises. Deut. xx. 5, "What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it." Comp. also Neh. xii. 27. Others, as Rosenmüller and Prof. Alexander, suppose that the psalm was designed to be used at the dedication of the altar reared by David on the "threshing-floor" of Ornan, which David purchased at the time of the pestilence which came upon the people for his sin in numbering the people, 1 Chron. xxi. 15-26. But there is no certain evidence of this. Apart from the incongruity of calling an altar a "*house*," the circumstances are not such as to lead us to believe that the psalm was composed for that occasion. The allusion in the psalm is rather to a previous state of depression, trouble, and sorrow, such as occurred in the life of David *before* he conquered his enemies, and *before* he was peaceably established on his throne,—and to the joy which he felt when he *had* triumphed over his foes, and *was* peacefully established as king in Jerusalem. All the circumstances seem to me to accord best with the time when David erected a house for his own abode—a palace—on Mount Zion, and to the act of dedicating such a house to God. See 2 Sam. v. 9-12; vii. 1, 2. It may be added that that was properly called "the house of David"—a name which could be given neither to the altar erected on the threshing-floor of Ornan, nor to the tabernacle, nor to the temple.

But although the psalm was composed for the purpose of being used at the dedication of his "house," it was in view of some important circumstances of his past life, and particularly of his feelings in time of dangerous illness, and of his obligation on his recovery to devote himself to God. In the dedication of his house to God he recurs with deep interest to that period of his life, and dwells with grateful satisfaction on the goodness of God manifested in his restoration to health. On entering his new abode, he seems to have felt that there was a special propriety in his recognising the fact that he owed his life to God; his life, not only in general, but in this special act of goodness, by which he had been raised up from the borders of the grave. *His former condition of calamity and sorrow as contrasted with his present happy and prosperous condition*, therefore, suggested the train of thought in the psalm at the dedication of his house. In the course of the psalm, as illustrating his feelings, he adverts to the following points:—(1.) His former state of self-confidence or security when he was in health, and when he thought his "mountain" stood "strong," vers. 6, 7. (2.) His sickness as a means of humbling him, and teaching him his dependence, vers. 2, 3. (3.) His prayer for deliverance when he was sick, vers. 2, 8—10. (4.) His deliverance as an act of God vers. 2, 3, 11. (5.) His obligation to give thanks to God for his mercy, vers. 1, 4, 12. These would suggest most appropriate topics of meditation on entering a new abode, and looking forward to the vicissitudes which might and which would probably occur there.

That the allusion in the psalm is to *sickness*, seems to me to be evident from vers. 2, 3, and 9, though at what time of life this occurred, or what was the particular form of disease, we are not informed. From vers. 3 and 9, however, it is certain that it was a *dangerous* illness; that he anticipated death; and that he was saved from death only in answer to fervent prayer. The psalm, therefore, in this respect, has a resemblance to Ps. vi., xxxv., and xli.—psalms composed also in view of sickness. In a book claiming to be from God, and designed for all mankind in a world where sickness so abounds, it was to be expected that there would be allusions to disease as well as to other forms of affliction, and that in the examples of ancient saints suffering on beds of pain, we should be able to find illustrations of proper pious feeling; that we should be

PSALM XXX.

A Psalm *and* Song *at* the dedication of the house of David.

I WILL extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

directed by their example to the true sources of consolation, and should be made acquainted with the lessons which God designs to teach us in sickness.

The direct contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. The author recounts the signal mercy of God to him in the time of his danger. God had lifted him up, and had not allowed his enemies to exult over his death, vers. 1–3.

II. He calls upon others to unite with him in praising God, and especially in view of the truth that affliction, as endured by the people of God, would not continue long, and that it would certainly be followed by peace and joy, as the light of the morning will certainly follow the darkest night, vers. 4, 5.

III. He adverts again, in illustration of this, to his former state, saying that there was a time when he thought he should never be moved; when he supposed that his "mountain" stood "strong," and that he was secure; but that God had hid his face, and troubled him, teaching him *not* to confide in his own strength, or in the mere fact that he was prosperous, vers. 6, 7.

IV. He adverts to his earnest prayer in the time of his affliction, and recounts the substance of that prayer, vers. 8–10. The *argument* which he then urged was that there could be no "profit" or advantage to God "in his blood," or in his being cut off; that the "dust," that is, the dead, could not praise him or declare his truth. He, therefore, prayed that God would keep him alive, that he might honour Him upon the earth.

V. In vers. 11, 12, he refers to the fact that the prayer was heard, and to the reason why it was heard. God had turned his mourning into dancing; he had put off his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness. The reason why God had done this was, that his "glory," that is, his tongue (marg.), might give praise to God, and not be silent; and, in view of all the goodness of God to him, he expresses his purpose to praise God for ever.

It will be seen, therefore, that the contents of the psalm are every way suitable to the occasion supposed to be referred to,—the dedication of his house to God. On entering such a habitation for the first time it was proper to recall the past scenes of his life,—his perils and troubles; it was proper to acknowledge the goodness of God in delivering him from those perils and troubles; it was proper to express his solemn purpose to serve God *in* that dwelling, and to consecrate himself and all that he had to him and to his service evermore. What was proper for the royal author of this psalm is proper for all; and there can be nothing more appropriate when we have erected a house to dwell in than to dedicate it to God, with a suitable recollection of his dealings with us in our past life, and to pray that *He* may also condescend to dwell with us there.

1. *I will extol thee.* Literally, *I will exalt thee;* that is, he would make God first and supreme in his thoughts and affections; he would do what he could to make Him known; he would elevate Him high in his praises. ¶ *For thou hast lifted me up.* To wit, from the state of danger in which I was (vers. 2, 3). The Hebrew word here used means properly to draw out, as from a well; and then, to deliver, to set free. As God had thus lifted *him* up, it was proper that he should show his gratitude by *lifting up* or extolling the name of God. ¶ *And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.* Hast not suffered them to triumph over me; that is, thou hast delivered me from them. He refers to the fact that he had been saved from a dangerous illness, and that his enemies had not been allowed to exult over his death. Comp. Notes on Ps. xli. 5.

2. *O* LORD *my God, I cried unto thee.* In the time of trouble and danger. ¶ *And thou hast healed me.* Thou didst restore me to health. The language here evidently refers to the fact that he had been sick, and had then been restored to health.

3 O LORD, thou [s] hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks [1] at the remembrance of his holiness.

5 For [2] his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure [3] for a night, but [4] joy *cometh* in the morning.

[s] Isa. xxxviii. 17. [1] Or, *to the memorial.*

[2] there is but *a moment in his anger.*
[3] *in the evening.* [4] *singing.*

3. *O* LORD, *thou hast brought up my soul from the grave.* My life; me. The meaning is, that he had been in imminent danger of death, and had been brought from the borders of the grave. The word here rendered *grave* is *Sheol*—a word which, properly used, commonly denotes the region of the dead; the under-world which is entered through the grave. Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 9; Ps. vi. 5. ¶ *Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.* More literally, "thou hast caused me to live from them which go down to the pit; that is, thou hast distinguished me from them by keeping me alive. The word *pit* here means the same as the grave. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 1.

4. *Sing unto the* LORD, *O ye saints of his.* This call upon others to give thanks to God is in view of the mercy which he had experienced. He invites them to unite with him in celebrating the praises of that God who had showed him so much mercy. It was not because *they* had been benefited by these tokens of the Divine favour; but (*a*) because when we *are* partakers of the Divine mercy, we desire that others may assist us in giving utterance to the praise due to God; and (*b*) because others may learn from the mercies bestowed on us that God *is* worthy of praise, or may see in his dealings with us an argument for his goodness; and may, therefore, appropriately unite in his praise. Thus religion diffuses its influence on all around us, and tends to *unite* the hearts of many in every manifestation of the character of God. Infidelity is solitary and dissocial; religion is social; and, no matter on whom the favour is bestowed, its effect is to unite the hearts of many to each other and to God. ¶ *And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Marg., *to the memorial.* The Hebrew is, *to the memory of his holiness.* The sense is, in calling to recollection the acts of his holiness, or his holy perfections. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 3. The word *holiness* here is used in a large sense as denoting, not so much the hatred of sin, as benevolence, kindness, mercy,—the Divine compassion towards those who are in trouble or danger. It is true that it *is* a proper subject of rejoicing and praise that God is a holy God, a God of truth and justice, a God who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence, a God in whose nature is combined every possible perfection; but that is not the exact idea here. The word refers to his compassion, goodness, kindness; and to the acts by which that had been manifested to the psalmist, as laying a proper foundation for gratitude and praise.

5. *For his anger* endureth but *a moment.* Marg., There is but *a moment in his anger.* So the Hebrew. That is, his anger endures but a short time, or brief period. The reference here is to the troubles and sorrows through which the psalmist had passed, as compared with his subsequent happiness. Though at the time they might have seemed to be long, yet, as compared with the many mercies of life, with the joy which had succeeded them, and with the hopes now cherished, they seemed to be but for a moment. God, according to the view of the psalmist, is not a Being who cherishes anger; not one who lays it up in his mind; not one who is unwilling to show mercy and kindness:—he is a Being who is disposed to be merciful, and though

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

t Ps. xviii. 35, 36.

7 LORD, by thy favour thou *t* hast [1] made my mountain to

[1] *settled strength for my mountain.*

he may be displeased with the conduct of men, yet his displeasure is not cherished and nourished, but passes away with the occasion, and is remembered no more. ¶ *In his favour* is *life.* It is his nature to impart life. He spares life; he will give eternal life. It is, in other words, not his nature to inflict death; death is to be traced to something else. Death is not pleasing or gratifying to him; it is pleasing and gratifying to him to confer life. His favour secures life; death is an evidence of his displeasure,—that is, death is caused by sin leading to his displeasure. If a man has the favour of God, he is sure of life; if not life in this world, yet life in the world to come. ¶ *Weeping may endure for a night.* Marg., *in the evening.* So the Hebrew. The word here rendered *endure* means properly *to lodge, to sojourn,* as one does for a little time. The idea is, that weeping is like a stranger—a wayfaring man—who lodges for a night only. In other words, sorrow will soon pass away to be succeeded by joy. ¶ *But joy* cometh *in the morning.* Marg., *singing.* The margin expresses the force of the original word. There will be singing, shouting, exultation. That is, if we have the friendship of God, sorrow will always be temporary, and will always be followed by joy. The morning will come; a morning without clouds; a morning when the sources of sorrow will disappear. This often occurs in the present life; it will always occur to the righteous in the life to come. The sorrows of this life are but for a moment, and they will be succeeded by the light and the joy of heaven. Then, if not before, all the sorrows of the present life, however long they may appear to be, will seem to have been but for a moment; weeping, though it *may* have made life here but one unbroken night, will be followed by one eternal day without a sigh or a tear.

6. *And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.* I shall never be visited with calamity or trial. This refers to a past period of his life, when everything seemed to be prosperous, and when he had drawn around him so many comforts, and had apparently made them so secure, that it seemed as if they could never be taken from him, or as if he had nothing to fear. To what precise period of his life the psalmist refers, it is now impossible to ascertain. It is sufficient to say, that men are often substantially in that state of mind. They have such vigorous constitutions and such continued health; their plans are so uniformly crowned with success; everything which they touch so certainly turns to gold, and every enterprise so certainly succeeds; they have so many and such warmly-attached friends; they have accumulated so much property, and it is so safely invested,—that it seems as if they were never to know reverses, and they unconsciously suffer the illusion to pass over the mind that they are never to see changes, and that they have nothing to dread. They become self-confident. They forget their dependence on God. In their own minds they trace their success to their own efforts, tact, and skill, rather than to God. They become worldly-minded, and it is necessary for God to teach them how easily he can sweep all this away,—and thus to bring them back to a right view of the uncertainty of all earthly things. Health fails, or friends die, or property takes wings and flies away; and God accomplishes his purpose,—a purpose invaluable to them,—by showing them their dependence on himself, and by teaching them that permanent and certain happiness and security are to be found in Him alone.

7. LORD, *by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.* Marg., *settled strength for my moun-*

stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.

u Ps. xxxiv. 6.

8 I cried *u* to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

tain. This refers, I apprehend, to his former state of mind; to his confidence in that which constituted his prosperity as referred to in the previous verse; to his feeling, in that state, that everything pertaining to himself was safe; to his freedom from any apprehension that there would be any change. The word *mountain* seems to be used as denoting that on which he relied as his security or strength, as the mountain, or the inaccessible hills, constituted a refuge and security in times of danger. See Ps. xviii. 1, 2, 33; xxvii. 5. It does not refer to Mount Moriah, or Mount Zion, as some have supposed, for the passage relates to a former period of his life when these were not in his possession; but he speaks of himself as having, through the favour of God, put himself into a strong position,—a position where he feared no enemy and no change; where he thought himself entirely secure,—the state of *prosperity* to which he had referred in the previous verse. In that state, however, God showed him that there was no real security but in his favour: security not in what a man can draw around himself, but in the favour of God alone. ¶ *Thou didst hide thy face.* That is, at the time when I was so confident, and when I thought my mountain stood so strong, and that I was so secure. Then I was shown how insecure and uncertain was all that I relied on, and how absolutely, after all that I had done, I was dependent for safety on God. To *hide the face* is synonymous in the sacred writings with the withdrawing of favour, or with displeasure. See Notes on Ps. xiii. 1. Comp. Ps. civ. 29. ¶ And *I was troubled.* I was confounded, perplexed, agitated, terrified. I was thrown into sudden fear, for all that I had so confidently relied on, all that I thought was so firm, was suddenly swept away. We do not know what this was in the case of the psalmist. It may have been the strength of his own fortifications; it may have been the number and discipline of his army; it may have been his own conscious power and skill as a warrior; it may have been his wealth; it may have been his bodily health,—in reference to any of which he may have felt as if none of these things could fail. When that on which he so confidently relied was swept away, he was agitated, troubled, anxious. The same thing may occur now, and often does occur, when men rely on their own strength; their health; their wealth. Suddenly any of these may be swept away; suddenly they *are* often swept away, to teach such men—even good men—their dependence on God, and to show them how vain is every other refuge.

8. *I cried to thee, O* LORD. That is, when those reverses came, and when that on which I had so confidently relied was taken away, I called upon the Lord; I uttered an earnest cry for aid. The prayer which he uttered on the occasion is specified in the following verses. The idea here is, that he was not driven *from* God by these reverses, but *to* him. He felt that his reliance on those things in which he had put his trust was vain, and he now came to God, the true source of strength, and sought His protection and favour. This was doubtless the design of the reverses which God had brought upon him; and this will always be the effect of the reverses that come upon good men. When they have placed undue reliance on wealth, or health, or friends, and when these are taken away, the effect will be to lead them to God in earnest prayer. God designs to bring them back, and they *do* come back to him. Afflictions are always, sooner or later, effectual in bringing good men back to God. The sinner is often driven *from* God by trial; the good man is brought back to find his strength and comfort *in*

9 What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

11 Thou hast turned [v] for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

[v] Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2; Isa. lxi. 3.

God. The one complains, and murmurs, and is wretched; the other prays, and submits, and is made more happy than he was in the days of his prosperity.

9. *What profit* is there *in my blood.* That is, What profit or advantage would there be to thee if I should die? What would be *gained* by it? The argument which the psalmist urges is that he could better serve God by his life than by his death; that his death, by removing him from the earth, would prevent his rendering the service which he might by his life. The same argument is presented also in Ps. vi. 5 (see Notes on that verse), and is found again in lxxxviii. 10—12, and in the hymn of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. See Notes on that passage. The prayer here used is to be understood, not as a prayer at the time of the composition of the psalm, but as that which the psalmist employed at the time when he thought his mountain stood strong, and when God saw fit to humble him by some calamity—perhaps by a dangerous illness, vers. 6, 7. ¶ *When I go down to the pit?* To the grave; or, If I should go down to the grave. Notes on ver. 3. ¶ *Shall the dust praise thee?* That which turns to dust; the lifeless remains. See Notes on Ps. vi. 5. ¶ *Shall it declare thy truth?* Can a lifeless body stand up in defence of the truth, or make that truth known to the living? This shows on what his heart was really set, or what was the prevailing desire of his soul. It was to make known the truth of God; to celebrate his praise; to bring others to an acquaintance with him. It cannot be denied that the statement here made is founded on obscure views, or on a misconception of the condition of the soul after death—a misconception which we are enabled to correct by the clearer light of the Christian religion; but still there is a truth here of great importance. It is, that whatever *we* are to do for making known the character and perfections of God on earth,—for bringing others to the knowledge of the truth, and saving their souls,—is to be done *before* we go down to the grave. *Whatever* we may do to honour God in the future world—in the vast eternity on which we enter at death,—yet all that we are to do in this respect on earth is to be accomplished before the eyes are closed, and the lips are made dumb, in death. We shall not return to do what we have omitted to do on earth; we shall not come back to repair the evils of an inconsistent life; we shall not revisit the world to check the progress of error that we may have maintained; we shall not return to warn the sinners whom we neglected to warn. Our work on earth will be soon done,—and done finally and for ever. If we are to offer prayer for the salvation of our children, neighbours, or friends, it is to be done in this world; if we are to admonish and warn the wicked, it is to be done here; if we are to do anything by personal effort for the spread of the Gospel, it is to be done before we die. Whatever we may do in heaven, these things are not to be done there; for when we close our eyes in death, our personal efforts for the salvation of men will cease for ever.

10. *Hear, O* LORD, *and have mercy upon me,* etc. This, too, is the prayer which he uttered in the calamities adverted to in ver. 7. It is a cry for mercy founded on the idea referred to in ver. 9.

11. *Thou hast turned for me.* In my behalf. That is, God had heard his prayer; he had brought his troubles to an end; he had caused his

12 To the end that *my* [1] glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

[1] i.e. *tongue*, or, *soul*, Ps. xvi. 9.

sorrows to be succeeded by correspondent joy. ¶ *My mourning into dancing.* Joy, exultation, every expression of rejoicing, had been made to succeed his deep sorrows. Comp. ver. 5. It was this which he commemorated at the dedication of his house; this joy succeeding scenes of sorrow that he now called to remembrance as he entered the place which he had reared for a permanent abode. The contrast of his circumstances now—in a palace, with every comfort of plenty and peace around him—with his former circumstances which had been so sad, made it proper for him thus to celebrate the goodness of God. ¶ *Thou hast put off my sackcloth.* That which I wore, or had girded around me, as an emblem of sorrow, or in the time of my mourning. See Notes on Isa. iii. 24; Job xvi. 15; and Matt. xi. 21. ¶ *And girded me with gladness.* Instead of a girdle of sackcloth he had been clothed in a gay and festive dress, or with such a dress—girded with an elegant girdle—as was worn on joyous and festive occasions. See Notes on Matt. v. 38—41.

12. *To the end that* my *glory may sing praise to thee.* Marg., my *tongue*, or my *soul.* De Wette renders it, *my heart.* The Chaldee Paraphrase, "that the honourable of the world may praise thee." The LXX. and the Latin Vulgate, *my glory.* The reference is, undoubtedly, to what the psalmist regarded as most glorious, honourable, exalted, in himself. There is no evidence that he referred to his *tongue* or his *heart* particularly, but the expression seems to be equivalent to *my highest powers*—all the powers and faculties of my nature. The *tongue* would indeed be the instrument of uttering praise, but still the reference is rather to the exalted powers of the soul than to the instrument. Let all that is capable of praise within me, all my powers, be employed in celebrating the goodness of God. ¶ *And not be silent.* Be employed in praise. ¶ *O* LORD *my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 20. This verse states the purpose which the psalmist now saw that God intended to accomplish by his dealings with him in the varied scenes of his past life; and his own purpose now as he entered his new abode. *The purpose of God,* in all these various dealings—in the prosperity which had been bestowed on him (vers. 6, 7); in the reverses and trials by sickness or otherwise which had come upon him (vers. 3, 7); and in the deliverance which God had granted him in answer to his prayers (vers. 2, 3, 10, 11)—was, that he should learn to praise the Lord. *His own purpose* now, as he entered his new habitation and dedicated it to God, was, to praise God with his highest powers for ever:—to consecrate all that he had to his gracious preserver; to make his house, not a habitation of gaiety and sin, but an abode of serious piety—a home where the happiness sought would be that which is found in the influence of religion. It is scarcely necessary to add that every new dwelling should be entered by a family with feelings similar to these; that the first act of the head of a family on entering a new habitation—whether it be a palace or a cottage—should be solemnly to consecrate it to God, and to resolve that it shall be a house where His praises shall be celebrated, and where the influence of religion shall be invoked to guide and sanctify all the members of the household.

PSALM XXXI.

This psalm is addressed to "the chief Musician," and purports to be a psalm of David. On the meaning of the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. There can be no doubt that the inscription which ascribes it to David is correct, and that he was the author. The occasion, however, on

PSALM XXXI.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

IN [w] thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy [x] righteousness.

[w] Ps. lxxi. 1—4. [x] Ps. cxliii. 1.

which it was composed is unknown, and cannot now be ascertained. Most of the Jewish and many Christian interpreters have supposed that it was written when David was in the wilderness of Maon, and when, having been betrayed (as to the place of his retreat) by the Ziphites, he was hotly pursued by Saul and his host, 1 Sam. xxiii. 19–26. There is, however, no particular reason for referring it to this period of his life, for there were many occasions to which it would be equally applicable.

Its general purpose is to inspire confidence in God in other hearts,—from the experience of the psalmist,—from that manifested favour by which he had been brought through his troubles. See vers. 23, 24. The psalm refers to the dangers which surrounded its author at the time referred to; his fears and apprehensions in those dangers; his calm confidence in God amid his dangers; the deliverance from trouble which was vouchsafed to him; his joy and gratitude for deliverance; and the lessons which others might learn in their trials from the Divine dealings towards him in his. That the psalmist was in trouble or danger when he penned this psalm there can be no reason to doubt; that he prayed earnestly at that time for deliverance is clear; but it is also plain that in the psalm he refers to former troubles, and to the deliverance which God had granted to him in *those* troubles, and that he seeks and derives consolation and assurance from the dealings of God with him then. In some parts of the psalm he refers to his present afflictions; in other parts to the trials of other days, and to his deliverances in those trials; in the entire psalm he inculcates the duty of confiding in God, from his own experience of his mercy, and from his own reliance on him.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

1. Prayer to God for deliverance from his sufferings and his enemies, on the ground of his confidence in Him, and his previous experience of His mercy, vers. 1-8.

II. Description of his troubles and of the calamities under which he was oppressed; or an enumeration of his present distresses, vers. 9–13. He says that he is in trouble, and that his eye is consumed with grief, ver. 9; that his life is spent with grief, and his years with sighing, that his strength failed, and that his bones were consumed, ver. 10; that he is a reproach among his neighbours and an object of dread to his acquaintances, or that they fled from him, he was so abject, forsaken, and afflicted, ver. 11; that he was forsaken and forgotten like a dead man who had passed away from the recollection of mankind, ver. 12; that he was slandered, and that men conspired together to take away his life, ver. 13.

III. Calm confidence in God in these times of trouble; or a calm committing of all into his hands, under an assurance which he felt that all would be well, vers. 14—20. He says that he trusted in God, ver. 14; and that his times were in the hand of God, ver. 15; he prays that God would deliver him, vers. 15–18; he finds comfort and peace in the assurance of the Divine goodness and mercy, ver. 19; and in the assurance that God would hide them that trusted in him from the pride of man, and would keep them safely in his pavilion, ver. 20.

IV. Thanks for deliverance, vers. 21, 22. He seems to have *found* the deliverance, even while he prayed, or to have had such an assurance of it that he could speak of it as if it were already his. He felt that he had been hasty in supposing that he would be cut off, and seems to have reproached himself for even a momentary doubt in regard to the goodness of God, ver. 22.

V. The lesson furnished to others by his experience, vers. 23, 24. It is a lesson of encouragement to all in similar circumstances, prompting them to be of good courage; to be cheered by his example and experience; never to despond; never to cease to trust God. Because *he* had found God to be a refuge and strength, he calls upon all others to believe that they would also find him such if they likewise trusted in him.

1. *In thee, O* LORD, *do I put my trust.* This is the ground of the petitions which follow; or the reason

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou [1] my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress: therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for thou *art* my strength.

5 Into [y] thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

[1] *to me for a rock of strength.*
[y] Luke xxiii. 46; Acts vii. 59.

why the psalmist thus appeals to God. It was his firm confidence in him; in his character; in his promises; in his ability to deliver him in the time of danger. Comp. Notes on Ps. vii. 1. ¶ *Let me never be ashamed.* That is, let me never have occasion to be ashamed for having put this confidence in thee. Let thy dealings towards me be such as to show that my confidence was well founded. The word is not used here in the sense of being unwilling to confess his faith in God, or his love for Him, as it is often now (comp. Rom. i. 16; v. 5; 2 Tim. i. 12), but in the sense of being so *disappointed* as to make one ashamed that he *had* thus relied on that which was unworthy of confidence. See Notes on Job vi. 20; comp. also Isa. xxx. 5; Jer. ii. 26; xiv. 3, 4. The psalmist prays that God would interpose in his behalf in answer to his prayers, and that he would show that He was worthy of the confidence which he had reposed in him, or that He was a God who might be trusted in the time of trial; in other words, that he might not be subjected to the reproach of the wicked for having in his troubles relied on such a God. ¶ *Deliver me in thy righteousness.* In the manifestation of thy righteous character; in the exhibition of that character *as* righteous; as doing justice between man and man; as pronouncing a just sentence between me and my enemies.

2. *Bow down thine ear to me.* As he does who inclines his ear towards one whom he is willing to hear, or whom he is desirous of hearing. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 6. ¶ *Deliver me speedily.* Without delay. Or, *Hasten* to deliver me. It is right to pray to be delivered from all evil; equally right to pray to be delivered *at once.* ¶ *Be thou my strong rock.* Marg., *to me for a rock of strength.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 1, 2, 46. ¶ *For an house of defence to save me.* A fortified house; a house made safe and strong, It is equivalent to praying that he might have a secure abode or dwelling-place.

3. *For thou* art *my rock and my fortress.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *Therefore for thy name's sake.* For the sake of thine own honour, or for the glory of thy name. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 3. That is, since thou *art* my rock and my defence—since I put my trust in thee—show, by leading and guiding me, that my trust is well founded, or that this *is* thy character, and that thou wilt be true and faithful to those who commit their all to thee. See Notes on ver. 1.

4. *Pull me out of the net.* See Notes on Ps. ix. 15. ¶ *That they have laid privily for me.* That my enemies have laid for me. The phrase "laid privily" refers to the custom of *hiding* or *concealing* a net or gin, so that the wild beast that was to be taken could not see it, or would fall into it unawares. Thus his enemies designed to overcome him, by springing a net upon him at a moment when he was not aware of it, and at a place where he did not suspect it. ¶ *For thou* art *my strength.* My stronghold. My hope of defence is in thee, and thee alone.

5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* The Saviour used this expression when on the cross, and when about to die: Luke xxiii. 46. But this does not prove that the psalm had originally a reference to him, or

6 I have hated them that regard [z] lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

[z] Jonah ii. 8.

that he meant to intimate that the words originally were a prophecy. The language was appropriate for him, as it is for all others in the hour of death; and His use of the words furnished the highest illustration of their *being* appropriate in that hour. The act of the psalmist was an act of strong confidence in God in the midst of dangers and troubles; the act of the Saviour was of the same nature, commending his spirit to God in the solemn hour of death. The same act of faith is proper for all the people of God, alike in trouble and in death. Comp. Acts vii. 59. The word *spirit* may mean either *life*, considered as the animating principle, equivalent to the word *myself*; or it may mean more specifically the *soul*, as distinguished from the body. The sense is not materially varied by either interpretation. ¶ *Thou hast redeemed me.* This was the ground or reason why the *psalmist* commended himself to God; this reason was not urged, and could not have been by the Saviour, in his dying moments. *He* committed his departing spirit to God as his Father, and in virtue of the work which he had been appointed to do, and which he was now about finishing, as a Redeemer;—*we* commit our souls to him in virtue of having been redeemed. This is proper for us, (*a*) because he *has* redeemed us; (*b*) because we have been redeemed *for* him, and we may ask him to take his own; (*c*) because this is a ground of safety, for *if* we have been redeemed, we may be certain that God will keep us; and (*d*) because this is the only ground of our security in reference to the future world. What *David* may have understood by this word it may not be easy to determine with certainty; but there is no reason to doubt that he *may* have used it as expressive of the idea that he had been recovered from the ruin of the fall, and from the dominion of sin, and had been made a child of God. Nor need we doubt that he had such views of the way of salvation that he would feel that he was redeemed only by an atonement, or by the shedding of blood for his sins. To all who are Christians it is enough to authorise them to use this language in the midst of troubles and dangers, and in the hour of death, that they have been redeemed by the blood of the Saviour; to none of us is there any other safe ground of trust and confidence in the hour of death than the fact that Christ has died for sin, and that we have evidence that we are interested in his blood. ¶ *O* LORD *God of truth.* True to thy promises and to thy covenant-engagements. As thou hast promised life and salvation to those who are redeemed, they may safely confide in thee. See Notes on 2 Cor. i. 20.

6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities.* This is evidently stated as a *reason* for the prayer offered in the previous verses. It is a reference by the psalmist to his own past life; to his general aim and conduct. The meaning is, that he had been a friend of God; that he had separated himself from wicked men; and he now prays in return for His protection and interposition. The sentiment is similar to that which occurs in Ps. xxvi. 3, 4, 5. See Notes on that passage. The word rendered *regard* here means to observe, to keep, to attend upon; and the reference is to those who show honour to what is here called "lying vanities;" that is, those who attend upon them, or who show them favour. The "lying vanities" are probably *idols*, and the allusion is to those who attended on the worship of idols as distinguished from those who worshipped the true God. Idols are often represented as false,—as vain, or vanity,—as a lie,—in contradistinction from that which is true and real. See Notes on 1 Cor. viii. 4. There is peculiar emphasis in the language used here as denoting the *utter* worth-

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known [a] my soul in adversities;

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou [b] hast set my feet in a large room.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.

10 For [c] my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

a Ps. cxlii. 3. *b* Ps. xviii. 19. *c* Ps. cii. 3, etc.

lessness and vanity of idols. The language means *vanities of emptiness;* denoting that they were *utterly* vain and worthless. ¶ *But I trust in the* LORD. In Jehovah, the true God, as distinguished from idols.

7. *I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.* I will triumph and joy in thy mercy; that is, in the mercy which he had already experienced, and in that which he still hoped to enjoy. He had had abundant proofs of that mercy; he hoped for still further proofs of it; and he says that he would find his joy in that, and not in what idols could give. ¶ *For thou hast considered my trouble.* In times past and now. He felt assured that his prayer would be regarded, and that God would relieve and deliver him. ¶ *Thou hast known my soul in adversities.* In the troubles that have come upon me. That is, God had seen and known all the feelings of his heart in the time of adversity;—his sorrow and anxiety; his hope and trust; his unmurmuring spirit; his feeling of entire dependence on God, and his belief that he would interpose to save him. God had not turned away from him, but had shown that he regarded with interest all his feelings, his desires, his hopes. It is much, in the time of trouble, to know that all our feelings are understood by God, that he sees all our sorrows, and that he will not be regardless of them. There are no states of mind more interesting than those which occur in adversities; there is no one who can fully understand the soul in adversities but God; there is no one but God who can wholly meet the wants of the soul in such seasons.

8. *And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.* Hast not delivered me into his hand, or into his power. See margin 1 Sam. xvii. 46; xxiv. 18; xxvi. 8. ¶ *Thou hast set my feet in a large room.* In a large place. Thou hast made me free, or set me at liberty. See Notes on Ps. iv. 1; xviii. 19, 36.

9. *Have mercy upon me, O* LORD, *for I am in trouble.* The nature and sources of his trouble are specified in the verses following. He seems to have regarded all his trouble as the result of sin, either the sin of his heart, of which he alone was conscious, or of some open act of sin, that had been the means of bringing this affliction upon him, ver. 10. As a consequence of this, he says that he was subjected to the reproach of his enemies, and shunned by his neighbours and his acquaintances; that he was forgotten by them like a dead man out of mind; that he was exposed to the slander of others, and that they conspired against his life, vers. 11–13. In view of all this he calls earnestly upon God to save him in his troubles, and to be his helper and friend. ¶ *Mine eye is consumed with grief.* That is, with weeping. See Notes on Ps. vi. 7. ¶ *Yea, my soul.* That is, my spirit, my life, my mind. My powers are weakened and exhausted by excessive grief. ¶ *And my belly.* My bowels: regarded as the seat of the affections. See Notes on Isa. xvi. 11; comp. Ps. xxii. 14. The effect of his grief was to exhaust his strength, and to make his heart sink within him.

10. *For my life is spent with grief.* The word here rendered *spent* does not mean merely *passed*, as it is commonly now used, as when we say we *spent* our time at such a place, or in

11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, [d] and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

[d] Job xix. 13.

12 I am forgotten as a dead

such a manner, but in the more proper meaning of the word, as denoting *consumed, wasted away*, or *destroyed*. See the word כָּלָה as used in Jer. xvi. 4; Lam. ii. 11; Ps. lxxxiv. 2 (Heb. 3); cxliii. 7; lxix. 3 (Heb. 4); Job xi. 20. ¶ *And my years with sighing.* That is, my years are wasted or consumed with sighing. Instead of being devoted to active toil and to useful effort, they are exhausted or wasted away with a grief which wholly occupies and preys upon me. ¶ *My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.* Because of the trouble that has come upon me for my sin. He regarded all this trouble—from whatever quarter it came, whether directly from the hand of God, or from man—as the fruit of *sin*. Whether he refers to any particular sin as the cause of this trouble, or to the sin of his nature as the source of all evil, it is impossible now to determine. As, however, no particular sin is specified, it seems most probable that the reference is to the sin of his heart—to his corrupt nature. It is common, and it is not improper, when we are afflicted, to regard *all* our trials as fruits of sin; as coming upon us as the result of the fall, and as an evidence that we *are* depraved. It is certain that there is no suffering in heaven, and that there never would be any in a perfectly holy world. It is equally certain that all the woes of earth are the consequence of man's apostacy; and it is proper, therefore, when we are afflicted, even though we cannot trace the affliction to any *particular* offence, to trace it all to the existence of evil, and to regard it as among the proofs of the Divine displeasure against sin. ¶ *And my bones are consumed.* That is, are decayed, worn out, or wasted away. Even the solid framework of my body gives way under excessive grief, and all my strength is gone. See Ps. xxxii. 3; cii. 3.

11. *I was a reproach among all mine enemies.* That is, he was subjected to their reproaches, or was calumniated and reviled by them. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 6. ¶ *But especially among my neighbours.* I was reproached by none more than by my neighbours. They showed special distrust of me, and manifested special unkindness, even more than my enemies did. They turned away from me. They abandoned me. They would not associate with me. They regarded me as a disgrace to them, and forsook me. Comp. Job xix. 13–15, and the Notes on that passage. ¶ *And a fear to mine acquaintance.* An object of dread or terror, so that they fled from me. ¶ *They that did see me without.* In the streets, or in public—out of my own house. Not only those in my own dwelling—the members of my family—regarded me in this manner, but passers in the streets—those whom I accidentally met—turned from me and fled in disgust and horror. It is not possible now to determine at what time in the life of the psalmist this occurred, or to ascertain the exact circumstances. There were, doubtless, times when with the saddest feelings he could say that all this was true of him. His troubles in the time of his persecutions by Saul, and still more probably his trials in the time when Absalom rebelled against him, and when he was driven away from his throne and his capital, would furnish an occasion when this would be true. If the latter was the occasion, then we can see how naturally he would connect all this with his "*iniquity*," and regard it as the consequence of his sin in the matter of Uriah,—a sin which would probably be always in his recollection, and which he would ever onward regard as lying at the foundation of all his afflictions.

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man*

man out of mind: I am like a [1] broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

[1] *vessel that perisheth.*

out of mind. Like the man who is dead, and who has passed away from the recollection of mankind. Comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 4, 5. The Hebrew is, "as a dead man *from the heart;*" that is, from the memory or recollection of men, so as to be no more remembered; no more regarded. The expression is nearly the same in meaning as our common English proverb: *out of sight, out of mind.* The allusion is to the fact that a man who is dead is soon forgotten. He is missed at first by a few friends, while the rest of the world knows little about him, or cares little about him. He is no longer seen where he has been accustomed to be seen, at the place of business, in the social circle, in the scenes of amusement, in the streets, or in public assemblies. For a short period a vacancy is created which attracts attention and causes regret. But the world moves on. Another comes to fill his place, and soon his absence ceases to be a subject of remark, or a cause of regret; the world says little about him, and soon he altogether ceases to be remembered. At no distant time the rude board with his name written on it, or the marble sculptured with all the skill of art, falls down. The passing traveller casts an eye upon the *name* of him who slept his last sleep there, and neither knows nor cares who he was.

"The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favourite phantom."—*Bryant.*

"On my grassy grave
The men of future times will careless tread,
And read my name upon the sculptured stone;
Nor will the sound, familiar to their ears,
Recall my vanish'd memory."
Henry Kirke White.

It is sad to reflect that this is to be *our* lot; but so it is. It would cast a most gloomy shade over life if this was to be the *end* of man, and if he passed from existence as soon as he passes from the recollection of the living. The idea of the psalmist here is, that, in the circumstances to which he referred, he had been forgotten by mankind, and he uses the most striking image which could be employed to convey that idea. ¶ *I am like a broken vessel.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *like a vessel that perisheth.* That is, like a vessel made of clay—a piece of pottery—that is easily broken and rendered worthless. This is a favourite comparison with Jeremiah. See ch. xxii. 28; xlviii. 38; Lam. iv. 2. Comp. also Ps. ii. 9; Isa. xxx. 14; Hosea viii. 8.

13. *For I have heard the slander of many.* The reproach; the false accusations; the unjust aspersions. We are here more definitely informed as to another of the sources of the trouble that came upon him. It was *slander.* He had already referred to *two* sources of trouble;—one (ver. 11) that he was *reproached* by his friends and neighbours, and that his society was shunned by them; a second, that he was *forgotten* by those who ought to have remembered him, and that they treated him as though he were dead, ver. 12. The third is referred to now; to wit, that he was the subject of *slander,* or of false reports. What was the *nature* of those false charges we are not informed. But it is not needful that we should know precisely what they were. It is enough, in order to see the depth and aggravation of his trouble, to know that he *was* exposed to this; and that, to all that he had to endure from other sources, there was this added,—that his name was reproached and cast out as evil,—that he was subjected to *slander,*

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds; and doth belie
All corners of the world."
Cymbeline, Act iii., Sc. iv.

14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.

15 My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from them that persecute me.

16 Make [e] thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

e Numb. vi. 25, 26.

¶ *Fear* was *on every side.* From the causes already specified. He knew not whom to trust. He seemed to have no friend. He was afraid, therefore, of every one that he met. ¶ *While they took counsel together against me.* See Notes on Ps. ii. 2. They entered into a conspiracy or combination. ¶ *They devised to take away my life.* They devised measures, or they laid a plot, thus to kill me. These are the grounds of the earnest prayer which he urges in ver. 9: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, *for I am in trouble.*"

14. *But I trust in thee, O* LORD. In these times of trial—when (ver. 9) his eye was consumed with grief; when (ver. 10) his years were spent with sighing, his strength failed, and his bones were consumed; when (ver. 11) he was a reproach among his neighbours, and dreaded by his acquaintances; when (ver. 12) he was forgotten as a dead man; and when (ver. 13) he was surrounded with causes of alarm. Then he trusted in God. His confidence did not fail. He believed that God was his Father and Friend; that He was on the throne; that He could protect and defend him; and he left himself and his cause with Him. In such circumstances as these there is no other sure refuge but God; at such times the strength of faith is shown, and then is seen pre-eminently the power and value of religion. ¶ *I said, Thou* art *my God.* Thou art all that is implied in the name "God;" and thou art mine. He felt assured that God would not forsake him, though men did; that he might confide in Him, though his earthly friends all turned away. There is always *One* who will not leave or forsake us; and the friendship and favour of that One is of more value to us than that of all other beings in the universe combined.

15. *My times* are *in thy hand.* That is, I said this in my trouble; when my friends forsook me, and when my enemies came around me and threatened my life. The meaning is, that all that pertained to him was under the control and at the disposal of God. He would *live* as long as God should please. It was His to give life; His to preserve it; His to take it away. All in relation to life,—its origin—its continuance—its changes —its seasons—childhood, youth, middle age, old age,—all was in the hand of God. No one, therefore, could take his life before the time that had been appointed by God, and he might calmly commit the whole to him. This we may feel in all seasons of life and in all times of danger; of sickness; of feebleness. We shall live as long as God has appointed; we shall pass through such changes as he directs; we shall die when and where and how he chooses. In the faithful discharge of our duty, therefore, we may commit all these things to him, and leave all at his disposal. ¶ *Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies.* That is, since all these things are under thy control; since thou hast power over my life and over all that pertains to me, I pray that thy power may be exerted in my behalf, and that my life may be rescued from danger. This was his prayer in the midst of his troubles, and this prayer was heard.

16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* That is, show me thy favour, or be kind and merciful to me. See Notes on Ps. iv. 6. ¶ *Save me for thy mercies' sake.* On account of thy mercy; or that thy mercy may be manifested. This is always a just ground of appeal to God by a sinner or a sufferer, that God would make our sins and trials an *occasion* for displaying his own character. There are,

17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be [1] silent in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak [2] grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

19 *Oh* how great *f is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.

[1] Or, *cut off for.*

[2] *a hard thing.* *f* Isa. lxiv. 4.

indeed, other grounds of appeal; but there is no one that is more pure or exalted than this.

17. *Let me not be ashamed, O* LORD, *for I have called upon thee.* That is, I have reposed entire confidence in thee, and in thy promises, in the time of trial; let now the result be such as to show that I had reason thus to trust in thee; that thy character is such that the persecuted and the afflicted *may* always find thee to be a safe and secure refuge. In other words, Let me not be disappointed, and thus be made *ashamed* before men, as if I had put my trust where no relief was to be found, or where there was nothing to authorize an act of unreserved confidence. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 2, 3. ¶ *Let the wicked be ashamed.* Let them be disappointed in that on which they had put their trust; let it be seen that they, in their wicked plans, had no safe ground of confidence. They rely on their strength; their skill; their courage; their resources; and not on God. Let it now be seen that these things constitute no safe ground of trust, and let not others be encouraged to follow their example by any success that shall attend them in their designs. ¶ And *let them be silent in the grave.* Marg., *let them be cut off for the grave.* Heb., *for Sheol.* The more correct translation is that which is in the text, *Let them be silent.* That is, let them go down to the grave—to *Sheol*—to the *underworld*—to the *land of silence.* On the meaning of the word here used—*Sheol*, the grave—see Notes on Isa. xiv. 9; comp. Notes on Job x. 21, 22; and on Ps. xvi. 10. This is represented as a land of *silence.* This idea is derived from *the grave*, where the dead repose in silence; and the meaning here is, let them be cut off and consigned to that land of silence. It is a prayer that the wicked may not triumph.

18. *Let the lying lips be put to silence.* See Notes on Ps. xii. 2, 3. The lips which speak lies. The reference here is especially to those who had spoken in this manner against the psalmist himself, though he makes the language general, or prays in general that God would silence all liars:—a prayer certainly in which all persons may properly join. ¶ *Which speak grievous things.* Marg., *a hard thing.* The Hebrew word—עָתָק, *âthâk*—means *bold, impudent, wicked.* Gesenius, *Lex.* The phrase here means, therefore, to speak wickedly, or to speak in a bold, reckless, impudent manner; that is, without regard to the truth of what is said. ¶ *Proudly and contemptuously.* Heb., in pride and contempt:—that is, in a manner which shows that they are proud of themselves and despise others. Slander always perhaps implies this. Men are secretly proud of themselves; or they *desire* to cherish an exalted opinion of themselves, and to have others entertain the same opinion of them; and hence, if they cannot exalt themselves by their own merit, as they wish, they endeavour to humble others below their real merit, and to a level lower than themselves, by detraction.

19. Oh *how great* is *thy goodness.* That is, in view of the Divine protection and favour in such cases, or when thus assailed. The psalmist seems to have felt that it was an inexpressible privilege thus to be permitted to appeal to God with the assurance of the

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou *g* shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

g Job v. 21.

Divine protection. In few circumstances do men feel more grateful for the opportunity of appealing to God than when they are reviled and calumniated. As there is nothing which we feel more keenly than calumny and reproach, so there can be no circumstances when we more appreciate the privilege of having such a refuge and friend as God. ¶ *Which thou hast laid up.* Which thou hast *treasured* up, for so the Hebrew word means. That is, goodness and mercy had been, as it were, *treasured up* for such an emergency,—as a man treasures up food in autumn for the wants of winter, or wealth for the wants of old age. The goodness of God is thus a treasure garnered up for the wants of his people—a treasure always accessible; a treasure that can never be exhausted. ¶ *For them that fear thee.* Or *reverence* thee,—fear or reverence being often used to denote friendship with God, or religion. See Notes on Ps. v. 7. ¶ Which *thou hast wrought for them.* Which thou hast *made* for them (Heb.); or, which thou hast secured *as if* by labour; that is, by plan and arrangement. It was not by chance that that goodness had been provided; God had done it in a manner resembling the act of a man who lays up treasure for his future use by plan and by toil. The idea is, that all this was the *work* of a benevolent God; a God who had carefully anticipated the wants of his people. ¶ *For them that trust in thee.* Who rely on thee in trouble, in danger, and in want;—who feel that their *only* reliance is on thee, and who *do* actually trust in thee. ¶ *Before the sons of men.* That is, Thou hast wrought this in the presence of the sons of men, or in the presence of mankind. God had not only laid it up in secret, making provision for the wants of his people, but he had wrought out this deliverance before men, or had shown his goodness to them openly. The acts of benevolence or goodness in the case were—*first,* that he had *treasured up* the resources of his goodness by previous arrangement, or by anticipation, for them; and *second,* that he had *wrought out* deliverance, or had *manifested* his goodness by interposing to save, and by doing it openly that it might be seen by mankind.

20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence.* See Notes on Ps. xxvii. 5. The phrase "secret of thy presence" means thy "secret presence." The Hebrew is, *the secret of thy face;* and the idea is, that he would hide them, or withdraw them from public view, or from the view of their enemies, into the very place where he himself dwelt, so that they would be before him and near him; so that his eye would be upon them, and that they would be certain of his protection. The language here is the same as in Ps. xxvii. 5, except that the word *face* or *presence* is used here instead of the word *tabernacle.* The idea is the same. ¶ *From the pride of man.* The Hebrew word here rendered *pride*—רֹכֶס, *rōkēs*—means properly *league* or *conspiracy;* then, *snares* or *plots.* It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, though the corresponding verb—רָכַס, *rakas*—occurs twice, meaning to *bind on* or *to,* Ex. xxviii. 28; xxxix. 21. The word here means *league* or *conspiracy,* and the idea is, that when the wicked form a conspiracy, or enter into a league against the righteous, God will take them, as it were, into his own immediate presence, and will protect them. ¶ *Thou shalt keep them secretly.* Thou wilt *hide* them as with thyself. ¶ *In a pavilion.* In thy tent, or dwelling-place. See Notes on Ps. xxvii. 5. ¶ *From the strife of tongues.* Slander; reproach; calumny. This does not mean the strife of tongues among themselves, or their contentions with each other,

21 Blessed *be* the LORD; for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a [1] strong city.

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off [h] from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

[1] Or, *fenced.*

[h] Job xxxv. 14.

but the united clamours of the whole against himself. God would guard the righteous from their reproaches, or their efforts to ruin them by slander. Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6.

21. *Blessed* be *the* LORD. An expression of thanksgiving for the evidence that God had heard him in his troubles, and had answered him. ¶ *For he hath showed me his marvellous kindness.* Literally, *He has made his mercy wonderful;* that is, he has showed me such mercy as to be an object of admiration and astonishment. It was not ordinary kindness, such as is shown to men every day; it was so uncommon—so far beyond all expectation—so separate from second causes and the agency of man—so marked in its character—as to fill the mind with wonder. ¶ *In a strong city.* Marg., *fenced city.* This may mean either that he had thus placed him literally in a strongly fortified city where he was safe from the fear of his enemies; or, that he had interposed in his behalf, and had given him protection *as if* he had brought him into such a strongly fortified place. Jarchi supposes that the city of *Keilah* (1 Sam. xxiii. 7) is here intended. But this is improbable. All that the passage necessarily implies is, that God had given him protection *as if* he had been placed in a strongly-fortified town where he would be safe from danger.

22. *For I said in my haste.* In my fear; my apprehension. The word rendered *haste* means properly that terror or alarm which causes one to flee, or to endeavour to escape. It is not *haste* in the sense of an opinion formed too quickly, or formed rashly; it is *haste* in the sense of terror leading to sudden flight, or an effort to escape. See an illustration of this idea in the case of David himself, in 1 Sam. xxiii. 26. ¶ *I am cut off.* That is, I shall certainly be cut off or destroyed. ¶ *From before thine eyes.* Either, in thy very presence; or, so that I shall not be admitted into thy presence. I shall be cut down, and suffered no more to come before thee to worship thee. Comp. Notes on Ps. vi. 5. ¶ *Nevertheless thou heardest,* etc. Contrary to my apprehensions, I was heard and delivered. God's mercy went *beyond* the psalmist's faith,—as it often does to His people now, far beyond what they hope for; far beyond what they even pray for; far beyond what they believe to be possible;—so far beyond all this, as to make the result, as in the case of David (ver. 21), a matter of wonder and astonishment.

23. *O love the* LORD, *all ye his saints.* This is the *application* of all the truths suggested in the psalm. The experience of the psalmist had shown the wisdom of trusting in God in times of danger and trouble, and had laid the foundation for a proper exhortation to others to imitate his example; an argument why all the people of God should love him, and should be of good courage. The reason here assigned for their loving the Lord is, that he preserves those who are faithful to him, and "rewards the proud doer." This *is* a reason for loving God, or for putting our trust in him,—though the psalmist does not say that this is the *only* reason for doing it. The meaning here is, that the dealings of God toward the psalmist had established this truth in regard to the character of God, that he *does* preserve the faithful, and *does* punish the proud, and that this fact constitutes a reason why all his

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

people should confide in him. ¶ For *the* LORD *preserveth the faithful.* The faithful;—those who put their trust in him; those who do not give up in despondency and despair in time of danger and trouble; those who do not forsake him even though for a time he *seems* to forsake them. What God looks for mainly in his people is confidence; faithfulness; trust; fidelity. ¶ *And plentifully rewardeth. Abundantly* rewards. Literally, *in plenty.* That is, his punishment does not fall short of the desert of the wicked man. It is ample or full. He does *full* justice. ¶ *The proud doer.* "The man *working pride.*" The reference is to the man who is confident in himself; who seeks to aggrandise himself, and who in doing this is regardless of the rights of others.

24. *Be of good courage.* See a similar exhortation at the close of a psalm, in Ps. xxvii. 14. Comp. Notes on that verse. As the result of all his own experience of the goodness of God, and of His gracious interposition in the time of danger, the psalmist exhorts others to be encouraged, and to feel assured that God would not leave or forsake them. ¶ *And he shall strengthen your heart.* He will animate you; he will enable you to meet trial and opposition; he will keep you from becoming faint and disheartened. ¶ *All ye that hope in the* LORD. All that put their trust in him, or all whose expectation is from him. It is a characteristic of true piety that all *hope* centres in God, or that the soul feels that there *is* no other ground of hope. (*a*) The truly pious man despairs of success in anything else, or from any other quarter, for he feels that God alone can give success. (*b*) He *does* hope in God—in reference to all that is needful for himself as an individual; all that will be for the good of his family; all that will tend to bless the world; all that he desires in heaven. Hope in God cheers him, sustains him, comforts him; makes life happy and prosperous; and makes death calm, serene, triumphant.

PSALM XXXII.

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription to that effect.

The *occasion* on which it was composed, however, is not intimated, nor is there any way now of ascertaining it. That David refers to his own experience is manifest from the psalm itself, vers. 3-5; but whether to his experience at the time of his conversion, or to his experience in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah—his deep guilt—his anguish of spirit on that occasion—the remorse of conscience which he felt when the guilt of that sin was brought home to his conscience; or whether he refers to some other occasion of his life when he was troubled at the remembrance of sin, it is impossible now to determine.

The *design* of this psalm is manifest. It is to show the blessedness of the forgiveness of sin. This is done by showing, in the first place, the pain, distress, and anguish, resulting from the conviction of guilt. Then follows a statement of the effects consequent on a frank and full confession of guilt in giving peace to the mind, and relieving the distress caused by the remembrance of guilt. It is remarkable that this psalm refers so much to the *inward* feelings; and that it contains no reference to any external acts,—to Jewish sacrifices and offerings. It pertains to the soul and to God; to the inward work of penitence and pardon; to the sorrow of conviction and to the peace of forgiveness; and it shows that there *was* among the Hebrews a just idea of the nature of religion as a spiritual transaction between the soul and God. Even De Wette recognises this, and sees in the psalm an illustration of the nature of faith and its bearing on salvation, and an illustration of the nature of true reconciliation with God. "In this psalm," says he, "as well as in Ps. li. and others, Judaism *nears itself*—*nähert sich*—to Christianity; it elevates itself from the mere legal to the moral." The psalm thus furnishes an illustration of the nature of true conversion to God, and is of value—as such an illustration

PSALM XXXII.

A Psalm of David, [1] Maschil.

BLESSED [i] *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered.

[1] Or, *giving instruction.*
[i] Rom. iv. 6—8.

—to all men; while it also shows that true religion, under all dispensations, is essentially the same.

The psalm is composed of the following parts:—

I. A statement of the blessings of forgiveness, as the leading thought of the psalm, vers. 1, 2.

II. A description of the state of mind, when under conviction for sin, vers. 3, 4.

III. The effect of confession of sin, resulting in a sense of forgiveness and peace, ver. 5.

IV. Encouragement to others in similar circumstances, derived from the example of the psalmist, or from the fact that *he* found peace and pardon when he called upon God, ver. 6.

V. An expression of confidence in God as a refuge and hiding-place in time of trouble, ver. 7.

VI. The proper spirit which they should have who are thus brought up from the depths of guilt; and the way in which they should receive the guidance and direction which will be afforded them, vers. 8, 9. The psalmist undertakes to instruct them; and says that they should cherish a spirit of humility and docility,—not the fierce spirit of the untamed horse, or the spirit of the obstinate mule.

VII. The blessedness of trusting in the Lord, as the result of the experience of the psalmist in this time of sorrow for sin, vers. 10, 11.

The word *Maschil* in the title—מַשְׂכִּיל, is derived from the verb—שָׂכַל, *sakhal*—meaning properly *to look at, to behold, to view;* and then, to be prudent, circumspect; to act prudently or circumspectly, as one does who looks attentively and carefully at objects; then it means to be intelligent, prudent, wise. The participle, which is the form used here (causat. of Hiph.), means *making wise or prudent,* or *conveying instruction;* and this title is given to this psalm, as well as to many others, as conveying the idea that the psalm was adapted *to make wise,* or to impart instruction; and the sense would be well expressed by our phrase, *didactic song.* The title is prefixed also to the following psalms: xlii., xliv., xlv., lii., liii., liv., lv., lxxiv., lxxxviii., lxxxix., cxlii. It would be difficult now, however, to discover from the contents of the psalms themselves why the title was affixed to these particularly rather than to many others. Probably this was determined, by those who collected and arranged the psalms, according to some rules that are not now known to us.

1. *Blessed* is he, etc. On the meaning of the word *blessed,* see Notes on Ps. i. 1. See the passage explained in the Notes on Rom. iv. 7, 8. The word *blessed* here is equivalent to *happy*:—"Happy *is* the man;" or "happy is the condition—the state of mind—happy are the prospects, of one whose sins are forgiven." His condition is happy or blessed (*a*) as compared with his former state, when he was pressed or bowed down under a sense of guilt; (*b*) in his real condition, as that of a pardoned man—a man who has nothing now to fear as the result of his guilt, or who feels that he is at peace with God; (*c*) in his hopes and prospects, as now a child of God and an heir of heaven. ¶ Whose *transgression* is *forgiven.* The word rendered *forgiven* means properly to lift up, to bear, to carry, to carry away; and sin which is forgiven is referred to here *as if* it were borne away,—perhaps as the scapegoat bore off sin into the wilderness. Comp. Ps. lxxxv. 2; Job vii. 21; Gen. l. 17; Num. xiv. 19; Isa. ii. 9. ¶ Whose *sin* is *covered.* As it were *covered over;* that is, concealed or hidden; or, in other words, so covered that it will not appear. This is the idea in the Hebrew word which is commonly used to denote the atonement,—כָּפַר, *kaphar,*—meaning *to cover over;* then, to overlook, to forgive; Gen. vi. 14; Ps. lxv. 3; lxxviii. 38; Dan. ix. 24. The original word here, however, is different — כָּסָה, *kasah*—though meaning the same,—*to cover.* The idea is, that the sin would be, as it were, covered over, hidden, concealed, so that it would no

2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth [k] not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

[k] 2 Cor. v. 19.

longer come into the view of either God or man; that is, the offender would be regarded and treated *as if* he had not sinned, or *as if* he had no sin.

2. *Blessed* is *the man unto whom the* LORD *imputeth not iniquity.* Whose sin is not *reckoned* to him, or *charged* on him. The reference here is *to his own sin.* The idea is not, that he is happy on whom God does not charge the guilt of other men, but that he is happy who is not charged *with his own guilt,* or who is treated *as if* he had no guilt; that is, as if he were innocent. This is the true idea of justification. It is, that a man, although he *is* a sinner, and *is conscious* of having violated the law of God, is treated *as if* he had not committed sin, or as if he were innocent; that is, he is pardoned, and his sins are remembered against him no more; and it is the purpose of God to treat him henceforward as if he were innocent. The act of pardon does not change the *facts* in the case, or *make him innocent,* but it makes it proper for God to treat him *as if* he were innocent. The sin will not be re-charged upon him, or reckoned to his account; but he is admitted to the same kind of treatment to which he would be entitled if he had always been perfectly holy. See Notes on Rom. i. 17; iii. 24; iv. 5; v. 1. ¶ *And in whose spirit* there is *no guile.* Who are sincere and true. That is, who are not hypocrites; who are conscious of no desire to cover up or to conceal their offences; who make a frank and full confession to God, imploring pardon. The *guile* here refers to the matter under consideration. The idea is not who are *innocent,* or *without guilt,* but who are sincere, frank, and honest in making *confession* of their sins; who keep nothing back when they go before God. We cannot go before him and plead our innocence, but we may go before him with the feeling of conscious sincerity and honesty in making confession of our guilt. Comp. Ps. lxvi. 18.

3. *When I kept silence.* The psalmist now proceeds to state his condition of mind *before* he himself found this peace, or before he had this evidence of pardon; the state in which he felt deeply that he was a sinner, yet was unwilling to confess his sin, and attempted to conceal it in his own heart. This he refers to by the expression, "When I kept silence;" that is, before I confessed my sin, or before I made mention of it to God. The condition of mind was evidently this:—he had committed sin, but he endeavoured to hide it in his own mind; he was unwilling to make confession of it, and to implore pardon. He hoped, probably, that the conviction of sin would die away; or that his trouble would cease of itself; or that time would relieve him; or that employment—occupying himself in the affairs of the world—would soothe the anguish of his spirit, and render it unnecessary for him to make a humiliating confession of his guilt. He thus describes a state of mind which is very common in the case of sinners. They know that they *are* sinners, but they are unwilling to make confession of their guilt. They attempt to conceal it. They put off, or try to remove far away, the whole subject. They endeavour to divert their minds, and to turn their thoughts from a subject so painful as the idea of guilt—by occupation, or by amusement, or even by plunging into scenes of dissipation. Sometimes, often in fact, they are successful in this; but, sometimes, as in the case of the psalmist, the trouble at the remembrance of sins becomes deeper and deeper, destroying their rest, and wasting their strength, until they make humble confession, and *then* the mind finds rest. ¶ *My bones waxed old.* My strength

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I [l] will confess

[l] 1 John i. 9.

failed; my strength was exhausted; it seemed as if the decrepitude of age was coming upon me. The word here used, and rendered *waxed old*, would properly denote *decay*, or the wearing out of the strength by slow decay. All have witnessed the prostrating effect of excessive grief. ¶ *Through my roaring.* My cries of anguish and distress. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 1. The meaning here is, that his sorrow was so great as to lead to loud and passionate cries; and this well describes the condition of a mind under deep trouble at the remembrance of sin and the apprehension of the wrath of God. ¶ *All the day long.* Continually; without intermission.

4. *For day and night.* I found no relief even at night. The burden was constant, and was insupportable. ¶ *Thy hand was heavy upon me.* Thy hand seemed to press me down. It weighed upon me. See Job xiii. 21; Ps. xxxix. 10. It was the remembrance of guilt that troubled him, but that seemed to him to be the hand of God. It was God who brought that guilt to his recollection; and God *kept* the recollection of it before his mind, and on his heart and conscience, so that he could not throw it off. ¶ *My moisture.* The word here used —לַשַּׁדִּי, *leshad*—means properly *juice* or *sap*, as in a tree; and then, *vital-moisture*, or, as we should say, *life-blood.* Then it comes to denote vigour or strength. ¶ *Is turned into the drought of summer.* Is, as it were, all dried up. I am—that is, I was at the time referred to—like plants in the heat of summer, in a time of drought, when all moisture of rain or dew is withheld, and when they dry up and wither. Nothing could more strikingly represent the distress of mind under long-continued conviction of sin, when all strength and vigour seem to waste away.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee.* That is, I *then* confessed my guilt. I had borne the dreadful pressure as long as I could. I had endeavoured to conceal and suppress my conviction, but I found *no* relief. The anguish became deeper and deeper; my strength was failing; I was crushed under the intolerable burden, and when I could no longer bear it I went and made humble confession, and found relief. The verb here used is in the future tense, "I *will* acknowledge my sin;" but in order to a correct understanding of it, it should be regarded as referring to the state of mind *at the time* referred to in the psalm, and the resolution which the psalmist *then* formed. The words "I *said*" should be understood here. This he expresses in a subsequent part of the verse, referring doubtless to the same time. "I said," or I formed a resolution to this effect. The idea is, that he could find no relief in any other way. He could not banish these serious and troublous thoughts from his mind; his days and nights were spent in anguish. He resolved to go to God and to confess his sin, and to see what relief could be found by such an acknowledgment of guilt. ¶ *And mine iniquity have I not hid.* That is, I did not attempt *then* to hide it. I made a frank, a full confession. I stated it all, without any attempt to conceal it; to apologise for it; to defend it. *Before*, he had endeavoured to conceal it, and it was crushing him to the earth. He now resolved to confess it all, and he found relief. ¶ *I said.* I formed the resolution. ¶ *I will confess my transgressions unto the* LORD. I will no longer attempt to hide them, or to suppress the convictions of guilt. I will seek the only proper relief by making confession of my sin, and by obtaining forgiveness. This resolu-

my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

6 For [m] this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time [l] when thou mayest be [n] found: surely in the floods of great waters [o] they shall not come nigh unto him.

m 1 Tim. i. 16. [l] *of finding.*

n Isa. lv. 6. *o* Isa. xliii. 2.

tion was substantially the same as that of the prodigal son: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned," Luke xv. 18. ¶ *And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* He found that God was willing to pardon; he no sooner made confession than he obtained the evidence of pardon. All the *guilt*, or the "*iniquity*" of his sin, was at once forgiven; and, as a consequence, he found peace. In what way he *had* evidence that his sin was forgiven he does not state. It *may* have been in his case by direct revelation, but it is more probable that he obtained this evidence in the same way that sinners do now, by the internal peace and joy which follows such an act of penitent confession. In regard to this, we may observe,—(*a*) the very act of making confession tends to give relief to the mind; and, in fact, relief never can be found when confession is not made. (*b*) We have the assurance that when confession *is* made in a proper manner, God *will* pardon. See Notes on 1 John i. 9. (*c*) When such confession is made, peace will flow into the soul; God will show himself merciful and gracious. The peace which follows from a *true* confession of guilt before God, proves that God *has* heard the prayer of the penitent, and *has* been merciful in forgiving his offences. Thus, without any miracle, or any direct revelation, we may obtain evidence that our sins are washed away, which will give comfort to the soul.

6. *For this.* With reference to this state of mind, or to this happy result; or, encouraged by my example and my success. The idea seems to be that others would find, and might find, encouragement from what had occurred to him. In other words, his case had furnished an illustration of the way in which sinners are pardoned, and a proof of the mercy of God, which would be instructive and encouraging to others in similar circumstances. The conversion of one sinner, or the fact that one sinner obtains pardon, becomes thus an encouragement to all others; for (*a*) pardon is always to be obtained in the same manner essentially,—by humble and penitent confession of sin, and by casting ourselves entirely on the offered mercy of God; and (*b*) the fact that *one* sinner has been pardoned, is full proof that others may obtain forgiveness also, for God is unchangeably the same. All those, therefore, who *have* been pardoned and saved in the world have become examples to the rest, and have furnished full proof that all others *may* be pardoned and saved if they will come in the same manner. See Notes on 1 Tim. i. 16. ¶ *Every one that is godly.* The original word here used would properly mean those who are pious, or who are already converted. It is the common word used in the Scriptures to denote *saints*, and is usually so translated. But, as used here, it would seem rather to denote those who are *inclined* to be pious, or who are seeking how they may become pious; in other words, those who are *religiously disposed.* The encouragement is to those who feel that they are sinners; who desire some way of relief from the burden of sin; who are convinced that there is no other source of relief but God, and who are disposed to make the same trial which the psalmist did,—to find peace by making confession of sin. All such persons, the psalmist says, might see in his case encouragement to come thus to God; all such would find him willing to pardon. ¶ *In a time when thou mayest be found.* Marg., as in

7 Thou *p* *art* my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs *q* of deliverance. Selah.

p Ps. cxliii. 9.

8 I will instruct thee, *r* and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will [1] guide thee with mine eye.

q Ex. xv. 1, etc.; Rev. xv. 2, 3.
[1] *counsel* thee, *mine eye* shall be *upon thee.*

Heb., *in a time of finding.* That is, they would find *that* to be a propitious time, or a time of mercy. It does not mean that there were appointed or set times in which God would be gracious; or that there were seasons when he was disposed to *give audience* to men, and seasons when he *could not* be approached; but the meaning is, that whenever they came thus—with this penitent feeling, and this language of confession — they would find *that* the time of mercy. The idea is not that God is any more disposed to show mercy at one time than another, but that they would find him *always* ready to show mercy when they came in that manner:—*that* would be the time to obtain his favour; *that* "the time of finding." The real time of *mercy,* therefore, for a sinner, is the time when he is willing to come as a penitent, and to make confession of sin. ¶ *Surely in the floods of great waters.* In times of calamity —as when floods of water spread over a land; or in a time of judgment—when such floods sweep everything away. The reference here is, doubtless, to the floods that will come upon the ungodly—upon a wicked world. The illustration is drawn probably from the deluge in the time of Noah. So, when God shall sweep away the wicked in his wrath,—when he shall consign them to destruction in the day of judgment,—the pardoned sinner will be safe. ¶ *They shall not come nigh unto him.* He will be secure. He shall not be swept off with others. Safe, as a forgiven man, — safe as a child and a friend of God,—he shall be protected as Noah was in the great deluge that swept off a guilty world. A pardoned man has nothing to fear, though flood or fire should sweep over the world.

7. *Thou* art *my hiding-place.* See Notes on Ps. ix. 9; xxvii. 5. The idea is that he would be safe under the protection of God. The general allusion is to concealment from an enemy, but the immediate reference is to sin, and the consequences of sin. By fleeing to God he would be secure against all the evils which sin brings upon men. ¶ *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.* Particularly the trouble which comes from guilt;—sadness and sorrow in the remembrance of sin; apprehension of the wrath of God in the world to come; the consequences of guilt in that unseen and eternal world. ¶ *Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.* With songs expressive of deliverance or salvation. It is not merely one song or a single expression of gratitude;— in his pathway to another world he will be attended with songs and rejoicings; he will seem to be surrounded with songs. He himself will sing. Others, redeemed like him, will sing, and will seem to chant praises because *he* is redeemed and forgiven. All nature will seem to rejoice over his redemption. Nature is full of songs. The birds of the air; the wind; the running stream; the ocean; the seasons —spring, summer, autumn, winter; hills, valleys, groves,—all, to one redeemed, *seem* to be full of songs. The feeling that we are pardoned fills the universe with melody, and makes the heaven and the earth seem to us to be glad. The Christian is a happy man; and he himself being happy, all around him sympathizes with him in his joy.

8. *I will instruct thee.* Many interpreters have understood this to refer to God,—as if he were now introduced as speaking, and as saying that he would be the guide of those who thus submitted to him, and who sought him by penitence and confes-

9 Be ye not as the horse, [r] *or* as the mule, *which* have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with [s] bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

[r] Prov. xxvi. 3.

[s] James iii. 3.

sion. But it is more natural to regard the psalmist as still speaking, and referring to his own experience as qualifying him to give counsel to others, showing them how *they* might find peace, and with what views and feelings they should come before God if they wished to secure his favour. He had himself learned by painful experience, and after much delay, how the favour of God was to be obtained, and how deliverance from the distressing consciousness of guilt was to be secured; and he regards himself as now qualified to teach others who are borne down with the same consciousness of guilt, and who are seeking deliverance, how they may find peace. It is an instance of one who, by personal experience, is fitted to give instruction to others; and the psalmist, in what follows, does merely what every converted man is qualified to do, and should do, by imparting valuable knowledge to those who are inquiring how they must be saved. Comp. Ps. li. 12, 13. ¶ *And teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.* The way which you are to take to find pardon and peace; or, the way to God. ¶ I *will guide thee with mine eye.* Marg., *I will counsel* thee, *mine eye* shall be *upon thee.* The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The literal *meaning* is, "I will counsel thee; mine eye shall be upon thee." De Wette, "my eye shall be directed towards thee." The *idea* is that of one who is telling another what way he is to take in order that he may reach a certain place; and he says he will watch him, or will keep an eye upon him; he will not let him go wrong.

9. *Be ye not as the horse.* The horse as it is by nature—wild, ungoverned, unwilling to be caught and made obedient. The counsel referred to in the previous verse is here given; and it is, that one who wishes to obtain the favour of God should not be as the wild and unbroken horse, an animal that can be subdued only by a curb, but should evince a calm, submissive spirit—a spirit *disposed* to obey and submit. If he becomes a subject of God's government, he is not to be subdued and held as the horse is—by mere force; there must be the cheerful submission of the will. Men are not brought into the service of God by physical power; they are not kept there by an iron *curb.* They come and yield themselves willingly to his law; they *must* come with that spirit if they would find the favour of God. ¶ Or *as the mule.* The mule is distinguished for its obstinacy, and this is evidently the ground of comparison here. The meaning is, be tractable, gentle, yielding; submit to the guidance and direction of God and his truth. ¶ Which *have no understanding.* That cannot be controlled by reason and conscience. They are governed only by power and by fear. Men have reason and conscience, and they should allow themselves to be controlled by appeals *to* their reason and to their moral sense. They are not made to be governed as brutes are. As they *have* a higher nature, they should permit themselves to be governed by it. ¶ *Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.* More literally, "in bit and bridle is their ornament to restrain them;" that is, the trappings or the ornaments of the horse and the mule consist of the bridle and the bit, the purpose of which is to restrain or control them. The allusion, however, is not to the bit and bridle *as* an "*ornament,*" but as the ordinary trappings of the mule and the horse. ¶ *Lest they come near unto thee.* Or rather, "because of its not approaching thee;" that is, because the horse and the mule will not come to thee of their own accord, but must be restrained and controlled.

10 Many [s] sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he [t] that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

[s] Ps. xvi. 4; 1 Tim. vi. 10.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

[t] Jer. xvii. 7, 8.

10. *Many sorrows* shall be *to the wicked.* The meaning here is, probably, that those who will *not* submit themselves to God in the manner which the psalmist recommends; who *are* like the horse and the mule, needing to be restrained, and who are to be restrained only by force, will experience bitter sorrows. The psalmist may refer here, in part, to sorrows such as he says he himself experienced when he attempted to suppress the convictions of guilt (vers. 3, 4); and partly to the punishment that will come upon the impenitent sinner for his sins. The sorrows referred to are probably both internal and external; those arising from remorse, and those which will be brought upon the guilty as a direct punishment. ¶ *But he that trusteth in the* LORD. He that has faith in God; he that so confides in him that he goes to him with the language of sincere confession. ¶ *Mercy shall compass him about.* Shall surround him; shall attend him; shall be on every side of him. It shall not be only in one respect, but in all respects. He shall be *surrounded* with mercy—as one is surrounded by the air, or by the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favour everywhere,—at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amidst mercies; he shall die amidst mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies.

11. *Be glad in the* LORD. Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice that there is a God; rejoice that he is such as he is; rejoice in his favour; find your joy—your supreme joy—in him. Comp. Notes on Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4. ¶ *Ye righteous.* You who are willing to go to him and confess your sins; you who are willing to serve and obey him. See Notes on ver. 6. The meaning is, that those who are disposed to confess their sins, and are willing to submit to him without being compelled by force, as the horse and the mule are, will find occasion for rejoicing. They will find a God who is worthy of their love, and they will find true happiness in him. ¶ *And shout for joy.* Give expression to your joy. Let it not remain merely in the heart; but give it utterance in the language of song. If any of the dwellers on earth have occasion for the loud utterances of praise, they are those who are redeemed; whose sins are forgiven; who have the hope of heaven. If there is any occasion when the heart should be full of joy, and when the lips should give forth loud utterances of praise, it is when one pressed down with the consciousness of guilt, and overwhelmed with the apprehensions of wrath, makes confession to God, and secures the hope of heaven. ¶ *All* ye that are *upright in heart.* That is, who are sincere in your confession of sin, and in your desires to secure the favour of God. Such have occasion for joy, for to such God will show himself merciful, as He did to the psalmist when *he* made confession of sin; to such God will give the tokens of his favour, and the hope of heaven, as he did to *him.* The experience of the psalmist, therefore, as recorded in this psalm, should be full of encouragement to all who are burdened with a sense of sin. Warned by his experience, they should not attempt to conceal their transgressions in their own bosom, but they should go at once, as he was constrained at last to go, and make full and free confession to God. So doing, they will find that God is not slow to pardon them, and to fill their hearts with peace, and their lips with praise.

PSALM XXXIII.

REJOICE [u] in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.

2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the [v] psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.

[u] Ps. xcvii. 12 Phil. iv. 4.
[v] Ps. cl. 3, 4.

PSALM XXXIII.

This psalm has no title prefixed to it, and it is not possible to determine with certainty who was the author, or on what occasion it was written. There is nothing in the psalm that has any special allusion to David, nor is there reference to any circumstances which would enable us to determine when it was composed. It has, indeed, no particular allusion to the Jewish religion, or to the prevailing mode of worship in that land, and is, in fact, so *general* in its sentiments and in its descriptions, that it might have been written at any period of the Jewish history, or even in any land. As it is found *among* the Psalms of David, and is between psalms which are both ascribed to David, we may presume that it was believed to have been composed by him; and there is nothing in it that is at variance with that belief. It is really but a carrying out of the sentiment with which the preceding psalm closes; and it has been conjectured that the intimate relation of the two psalms may have been the reason why the title to the latter of them was omitted.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:—I. an exhortation to praise God; II. reasons why he should be praised; and III. the expression of a purpose thus to praise him.

I. An exhortation to praise God, vers. 1-3. In this there is a call on the righteous to praise him with songs and with musical instruments,—the harp, the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings;—a call to make use of the best powers of music in all its varied forms in his service.

II. Reasons for thus praising him, vers. 4-19.

(1) His general character for goodness and truth, vers. 4, 5.

(2) The fact that he made the universe;—or, the wisdom and power displayed by him in creation, vers. 6-9.

(3) The stability of his counsel or purposes, vers. 10, 11.

(4) The blessings which he bestows upon those who acknowledge him to be their God—blessings of care, protection, and deliverance in danger, vers. 12-19.

III. The purpose of the writer, and of those who were associated with him, thus to praise God, vers. 20-22.

The psalm is thus one that is appropriate to the people of all lands and times, and will be better appreciated in proportion as men become more and more acquainted with God in the wisdom, the power, and the skill which he has shown in the works of creation, and in his providential government of the world.

1. *Rejoice in the* LORD, *O ye righteous.* This is the sentiment with which the preceding psalm closes. See Notes on Ps. xxxii. 11. ¶ For *praise is comely for the upright.* Is befitting, suitable, proper. That is, the upright—the righteous—have abundant cause for praise, and it is for them a suitable employment, or one which becomes them. A man who *is* upright, or who *is* a righteous man, has in this very fact much which lays a foundation for praise, for the fact that he has such a character is to be traced to the grace of God, and this in itself is a more valuable possession than gold or kingly crowns would be. That he is not an open violator of the law of God; that he is not intemperate; that he is not the victim of raging lusts and passions; that he is not a dishonest man; that he is not profane; that he is not an infidel or a scoffer;—that he *is* a pious man,—a redeemed man,—a man of good character,—an heir of heaven,—is *the* highest blessing that could be conferred on him; and he who has been saved from outbreaking transgression and crime in a world like this, and has been enabled to live an upright life, has eminently occasion to praise and bless God. Assuredly for such a man praise is an appropriate employment; for such a man it is "comely."

2. *Praise the* LORD *with harp.* For a description of the *harp*, see Notes on Isa. v. 12. ¶ *Sing unto him with*

3 Sing [w] unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

4 For the word of the LORD *is* right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full [x] of the [1] goodness of the LORD.

w Ps. cxliv. 9; Rev. v. 9.

x Ps. cxix. 64. [1] Or, *mercy.*

the psaltery. For the meaning of this word, also, see Notes on Isa. v. 12, where the word is rendered *viol.* ¶ And *an instrument of ten strings.* The word "*and*" is supplied here by the translators as if, in this place, a third instrument was referred to, distinct from the harp and the psaltery. The more correct rendering, however, would be, "a psaltery (or lyre) of ten strings." The same construction occurs in Ps. cxliv. 9. In Ps. xcii. 3, however, the two words are separately used as denoting different instruments. The *lyre* or psaltery was probably not always made with the same number of strings, and it would seem that the one that was made of *ten* strings had something peculiar about it as an instrument of uncommon sweetness or power. Hence it is particularly designated here; and the idea is that the instruments of especial power and sweetness should be on this occasion employed in the service of God.

3. *Sing unto him a new song.* A song specially composed for this occasion; expressive of the peculiar feelings suggested by this occasion, or appropriate to this new manifestation of the Divine goodness and mercy. Such occasions, exhibiting some new phase of the Divine goodness, demanded new language appropriate to them. So now, new hymns of praise, and new tunes in music, are demanded to meet the ever-varying manifestations of the mercy of God; and as the church is extended in the world, its modes of praise must be adapted to the new state of things which will arise. Nothing could be more absurd than to attempt to restrict the church in its praises to the exact words which were used in the time of David, or to the music which was employed then. Comp. Notes on Rev. v. 9. The expression "*new song*" occurs several times in the Psalms, showing that new hymns of praise were composed as adapted to some new manifestation of the goodness of God: Ps. xl. 3; xcvi. 1; xcviii. 1; cxliv. 9; cxlix. 1. Compare also Isa. xlii. 10. ¶ *Play skilfully with a loud noise.* Literally, *Do well to play;* or, *do well in playing.* That is, do the work well, or with all the skill of music. The word rendered *loud noise,* means properly *a shout of joy* or rejoicing: Job viii. 21; 1 Sam. iv. 5. It is especially applied to the sound or clangour of trumpets: Lev. xxv. 9; xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1. There is rather the idea of *rejoicing* than of *noise* in the word. The meaning is that the music should be such as would be expressive of the highest joy.

4. *For the word of the* LORD *is right.* The command; the law; the promise of God. Whatever he *says* is right; or, is true. It is worthy of universal belief; and should, therefore, be a reason for praise. The fact that God *says* a thing is the highest proof that it is true. ¶ *And all his works* are done *in truth.* Or rather, *in faithfulness.* That is, All that he does is executed faithfully. He does all that he promises, and all that he does is such as to claim universal confidence. Whatever he does is, from the very fact that *he* does it, worthy of the confidence of all his creatures. None, however they may be affected by what he does, have any reason to doubt that it is perfectly right. God is the only Being of whom we have any knowledge, concerning whom we can feel this certain assurance.

5. *He loveth righteousness.* See Ps. xi. 7. ¶ *And judgment.* Justice. ¶ *The earth is full of the goodness of the* LORD. Marg., *mercy.* So the Hebrew. That is, his mercy or goodness is manifest everywhere. Every

6 By [y] the word of the LORD were the heavens made: and all [z] the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He [a] gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth [b] in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, [d] and it was

y Heb. xi. 3. z Gen. ii. 1. a Job xxvi. 10. b Job xxxviii. 8—11. c Jer. x. 7. d Gen. i. 3, etc.

part of the earth bears witness that he is good.

6. *By the word of the* LORD. By the command of God: Gen. i. 3, 6, etc. See Notes on ver. 9. ¶ *Were the heavens made.* That is, the starry heavens; the worlds above us: Gen. i. 1. ¶ *And all the host of them.* All their *armies.* The stars are represented as armies or marshalled hosts, led forth at his command, and under his direction,—as armies are led forth in war. See Gen. ii. 1; comp. Notes on Isa. i. 9. ¶ *By the breath of his mouth.* By his word or command—as our words issue from our mouths with our breath. The idea here is, that God is the Creator of all things; and, as such, has a claim to praise; or, that *as* Creator he is entitled to adoration. To this he is entitled from the *fact* that he has made all things, and from the *manner* in which it has been done—the wisdom, power, goodness, skill, with which it has been accomplished.

7. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap.* The Hebrew word here rendered *gathereth* is a participle;—*gathering.* The design is to represent this as a continuous act; an act not merely of the original creation, but constantly occurring. The reference is to the power by which the waters are gathered and kept together; the continual power which prevents their overspreading the earth. The word rendered *heap* —נֵד, *Ned*—means properly a heap or *mound*, and is applied to the waves of the sea heaped up together like mounds. Comp. Josh. iii. 13, 16; Ex. xv. 8: Ps. lxxviii. 13. He collected those waters, and kept them in their places, as if they were solid matter. This denotes the absolute control which God has over the waters, and is thus a most striking illustration of his power. ¶ *He layeth up the depth in storehouses.* The abysses; the deep waters; the masses of water. He places them where he pleases; he disposes of them as the farmer his grain, or the rich man his treasures. The caverns of the ocean—the ocean-beds—are thus vast reservoirs or treasure-houses for the reception of the waters which God has chosen to deposit there. All this is proof of his amazing power, and all this lays a proper foundation for praise. Occasions for gratitude to him may be found in every world that he has made; in every object that has come from his hand; and nothing more *obviously* suggests this than his wondrous power over the waters of the ocean—collecting them, restraining them, controlling them, as he pleases.

8. *Let all the earth.* All the inhabitants of the earth. ¶ *Fear the* LORD. Worship and adore a Being of so great power. See Notes on Ps. v. 7. ¶ *Let all the inhabitants of the world.* The power displayed in the works of creation appeals to *all* alike. ¶ *Stand in awe of him.* Reverence or adore him. The expression is equivalent to *worship*,—fear or reverence entering essentially into the idea of worship.

9. *For he spake, and it was* done. The word "*done*," introduced here by our translators, enfeebles the sentence. It would be made more expressive and sublime as it is in the original:—"He spake, and it was." That is, Its existence depended on his word; the universe sprang into being at his command; he had only to speak, and it arose in all its grandeur where before there was nothing. There is

done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

10 The LORD [1] bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought;

[1] *maketh frustrate.* *d* Isa. xliv. 25. *e* Isa. xlvi. 10.

he [d] maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11 The counsel [e] of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to [2] all generations.

[2] *generation and generation.*

here an undoubted allusion to the account in Genesis of the work of creation,—where the statement is that all depended on the command or the word of God: ch. i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26. Nothing more sublime can be conceived than the language thus employed in the Scriptures in describing that work. No more elevated conception can enter the human mind than that which is implied when it is said, God *spoke* and all this vast and wonderful universe rose into being. ¶ *He commanded.* He gave order; he required the universe to appear. ¶ *And it stood fast.* Or rather, *stood.* That is, it stood forth; it appeared; it rose into being. The idea of its "standing *fast*" is not in the original, and greatly enfeebles the expression.

10. *The* LORD *bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.* Marg., *maketh frustrate.* The Hebrew word means to *break,* or to *annul.* The word here rendered *heathen* means *nations;* and the idea is that God, by his own overruling purpose and providence, frustrates the designs of the nations of the earth; that he carries forward his own designs and purposes in spite of theirs; that their plans avail nothing when they come in competition with his. *Their* purposes must yield to *his.* Comp. Notes on Isa. viii. 9, 10; and xix. 3. All the plans and purposes of the nations of the earth that conflict with the purposes of God will be vain; all those plans, whatever they may be, will be made subservient under his Providence to the promotion of his great designs. ¶ *He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.* That is, he renders them vain, unsuccessful, ineffectual. The word *people* here is synonymous with *nations,* and the idea is, that whatever may be the thoughts and purposes of men, if they are opposed to the plans of God, or if they do not tend to promote his glory, they will be rendered futile or vain. God is a great and glorious Sovereign over all, and he will make everything subordinate to the promotion of his own great designs.

11. *The counsel of the* LORD. The purpose of the Lord. ¶ *Standeth for ever.* It will be carried out. It will never be changed. There can be no *superior* counsel or will to change it, as is the case with the plans of men; and no purposes of any beings *inferior* to himself—angels, men, or devils—can affect, defeat, or modify his eternal plans. No changes in human affairs can impede his plans; no opposition can defeat them; no progress can supersede them. ¶ *The thoughts of his heart.* The things which he has *designed,* or which he intends shall be accomplished. ¶ *To all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *to generation and generation.* That is, from one generation of men to another; or, to all time. The plans of God are not changed by the passing off of one generation and the coming on of another; by new dynasties of kings, or by the revolutions that may occur in states and empires. Men can seldom cause *their* plans to be carried forward beyond the generation in which they live; and they can have no security that coming generations, with their own plans, will not abolish or change all that has been devised or purposed before. No man can make it certain that his own will, even in regard to *property,* will be carried out in the generation that succeeds him. No monarch can make it certain that his plans will be perfected by his successors. Schemes devised with the profoundest care and the highest wisdom may be set

12 Blessed [f] *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he [g] beholdeth all the sons of men.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He [h] fashioneth their hearts

f Ps. lxv. 4. *g* Prov. xv. 3. *h* Prov. xxii. 2.

aside by those who are next in power; and no individual can hope that coming ages will feel sufficient interest in him or his memory to carry on his plans. Who feels now any obligation to carry out the projects of Cæsar or Alexander? How long since have all their plans passed away! So it will be with all who are now playing their parts on the earth! But none of these things affect the purposes of Him who will continue to live and to carry out his own designs when all the generations of men shall have passed away.

12. *Blessed* is *the nation.* For the meaning of the word *blessed*, see Notes on Ps. i. 1. The idea here is, that the nation referred to is happy, or that its condition is desirable. What is true of a nation is also as true of an individual. ¶ *Whose God* is *the* LORD. Whose God is Jehovah,—for so this is in the original Hebrew. That is, the nation which worships Jehovah, and is under his protection. This is evidently said to distinguish such a nation from those which worshipped false gods or idols. Such a nation is blessed or happy, because (*a*) he is a *real* God, the true God, and not an imagination or fiction; (*b*) because his laws are just and good, and their observance will always tend to promote the public welfare and prosperity; (*c*) because his protection will be vouchsafed to such a nation; and (*d*) because his worship, and the influence of his religion, will tend to diffuse virtue, intelligence, purity, and truth, over a land, and thus will promote its welfare. ¶ And *the people* whom *he hath chosen for his own inheritance.* Chosen to be *his;* or, his portion. The primary reference here is undoubtedly to the Hebrew people, called his *inheritance;* Deut. iv. 20; ix. 26; xxxii. 9; Ps. lxxiv. 2; lxxviii. 62, 71; or *heritage,* Ps. xciv. 5; Jer. xii. 7, 9; but what is here affirmed of that people is true also of all other people who worship the true God.

13. *The* LORD *looketh from heaven.* Heaven is represented as his abode or dwelling; and from that place he is represented as looking down upon all the nations of the earth. The meaning here is, that he sees all that dwell upon the earth, and that therefore all that worship him are under his eye. He knows their wants, and he will watch over them to protect them. It is not merely to the abstract truth that God *sees* all who dwell upon the earth that the psalmist means to refer; but that those who are his friends, or who worship him, are all under his eye, so as to enjoy his watchful care and attention. ¶ *He beholdeth all the sons of men.* All the descendants of *Adam,*—for this is the original. There is no improbability in supposing that the word *Adam* here (usually meaning *man*) is employed as a proper name to denote the great ancestor of the human race, and that the psalmist means to refer to the race *as* one great family descended from a common ancestor, though scattered abroad over the face of the world.

14. *From the place of his habitation.* From his dwelling,—heaven. ¶ *He looketh down.* He continually sees. The sentiment is repeated here to show that no one can escape his eye; that the condition, the characters, the wants of all are intimately known to him, and that thus he *can* watch over his people—all that love and serve him—and *can* guard them from danger. See vers. 18, 19.

15. *He fashioneth their hearts*

alike; he considereth all their works.

16 There *i* is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

i Ps. xliv. 3—7.

17 An horse *k is* a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.

18 Behold, the eye *l* of the LORD *is* upon them that fear

k Prov. xxi. 31; Hos. xiv. 3.
l 1 Pet. iii. 12.

alike. That is, one as well as another; or, one as really as another. No one is exempt from his control, or from all that is implied in the word *fashioneth.* The meaning is not that their hearts are made to *resemble* each other, or to be *like* each other, whether in goodness or in wickedness,—but that all alike *are* made by him. The idea in the word "*fashioneth*" here is not that of *creating*, in the sense that He *makes* the heart by his own power what it is, whether good or bad;—but that, as he has *formed* the hearts of all men, he must see what is *in* the heart, or must behold all the purposes and thoughts of men. The Maker of the human heart must understand what is in it; and therefore He must have a clear understanding of the purposes and designs of men. This idea is carried out in the latter member of the sentence, "he *considereth* all their works," and is substantially the same as in the expression (Ps. xciv. 9), "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" ¶ *He considereth all their works.* He understands all that they do; he marks, or attends to, all that is done by them. The purpose here is to state the universal sovereignty of God. He made all things; he presides over all things; he sees all things; he is the source of safety and protection to all.

16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.* By the number of his armies. His safety, however numerous and mighty may be his forces, is in God alone. He is the great Protector, whatever means men may use to defend themselves. The most numerous and the best organized armies cannot secure a victory. It is, after all, wholly in the hands of God. A wasting sickness in a camp may defeat all the plans of war; or success in battle may depend on contingencies which no commander could anticipate or provide against. A mutiny in a camp, or a panic on the battle-field, may disconcert the best-laid schemes; or forces may come against an army that were unexpected; or storm and tempest may disarrange and frustrate the entire plan of the campaign. See Eccl. ix. 11. ¶ *A mighty man.* A strong man; a giant,—as Goliath of Gath. *Strength* is not the only thing necessary to secure a victory. ¶ *Is not delivered by much strength.* By the mere fact that he is strong. Other things are needed to ensure success; and God has power so to arrange events that mere strength shall be of no avail.

17. *An horse.* The reference here is undoubtedly to the war-horse. See Notes on Ps. xx. 7. ¶ Is *a vain thing.* Literally, is a *lie.* That is, he cannot be confided in. ¶ *For safety.* For securing safety in battle. He is liable to be stricken down, or to become wild and furious so as to be beyond the control of his rider; and however strong or fleet he may be, or however well he may be "broken," yet none of these things make it certain that the rider will be safe. *God* is the only being in whom perfect confidence can be reposed. ¶ *Neither shall he deliver* any *by his great strength.* Safety cannot be found in his mere *strength*, however great that may be. These illustrations are all designed to lead the mind to the great idea that safety is to be found in God alone, vers. 18, 19.

18. *Behold, the eye of the* LORD is *upon them that fear him.* He watches over them, and *he* guards

him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in [m] famine.

20 Our [n] soul waiteth for the LORD; he *is* our help and our shield.

21 For [o] our heart shall rejoice in him, because [p] we have trusted in his holy name.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us according as we hope in thee.

m Ps. xxxvii. 19. *n* Ps. cxv. 9—11.
o Zec. x. 7; John xvi. 22. *p* Isa xxv. 9.

them from danger. His eye is, in fact, upon all men; but it is directed with special attention to those who fear him and trust in him. Their security is in the fact that the eye of God is upon them; that he knows their wants; that he sees their dangers; that he has ample ability to deliver and save them. ¶ *Upon them that hope in his mercy.* Upon the pious; upon his friends. The expression is a very beautiful one. It describes the true state of a pious heart; it in fact characterises the whole of religion, for we imply all that there is in religion on earth when we say of a man, that—conscious of his weakness and sinfulness—*he hopes in the mercy of God.*

19. *To deliver their soul from death.* To preserve their *lives*,—for so the word *soul* is to be understood here. The meaning is, to keep them alive. That is, God is their protector; he guards and defends them when in danger. ¶ *And to keep them alive in famine.* In times of want. Comp. Job v. 20. He can provide for them when the harvests fail. Famine was one of the evils to which the inhabitants of Palestine, and of Oriental countries generally, were particularly exposed, and it is often referred to in the Scriptures.

20. *Our soul waiteth for the* LORD. This and the subsequent verses to the end of the psalm refer to the people of God, expressing their faith in him in view of the considerations suggested in the former part of the psalm. The language is expressive of the general character of piety. True piety leads men to wait on the Lord; to depend on him; to look to his interposition in danger, sickness, poverty, want; to rely on him for all that is hoped for in this life, and for salvation in the life to come. Comp. Ps. lxii. 1; xxv. 3. ¶ *He* is *our help.* Our aid; our helper. Comp. Ps. x. 14; xxii. 11; xxx. 10. ¶ *And our shield.* See Notes on Ps. v. 12. That is, he will defend us from our enemies, *as if* he threw his shield between us and them.

21. *For our heart shall rejoice in him.* See Notes on Ps. xiii. 5. ¶ *Because we have trusted in his holy name.* In *him*,—the *name* often being put for the person himself. See Notes on Ps. xx. 1. The idea is (*a*) that the fact of our having put our trust in God is in itself an occasion of joy or rejoicing; (*b*) that the result will be joy, for we shall never be disappointed. It will always, and in all circumstances, be a source of joy to any one that he *has* put his trust in the name of God.

22. *Let thy mercy, O* LORD, *be upon us.* Let us find or obtain thy mercy or thy favour. ¶ *According as we hope in thee.* It may be remarked in regard to this,—(*a*) it is but *reasonable* that we should look for the favour of God *only* as we trust in him, for we could not with propriety expect his favour beyond the measure of our confidence in him. (*b*) This may be regarded as the *most* that we are entitled to hope from God. We have no reason to suppose that he will go *beyond* our wishes and prayers, or that he will confer favours on us which we neither expect nor desire. (*c*) One of the reasons why the people of God are no *more* blessed, or why they receive no *more* favours from him, may be found in what is here suggested. As they expect little,

they obtain little; as they have no intense, burning, lofty desire for the favour of God, either for themselves personally, or for their families, or for the world, so they obtain but slight tokens of that favour. (*d*) The true principle, therefore, on which God is willing to bestow his favours, and which will be the rule that he will observe, is, that if men desire much, they will obtain much; that if they have large expectations, they will not be disappointed; and that God is willing to bestow his mercies on his people and on the world to the utmost of their desires and hopes. Comp. Ps. lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps. xxxvii. 4, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." How intense and fervent, then, should be the prayers and the petitions of the people of God! How earnest the supplications of sinners that God would have mercy on them!

PSALM XXXIV.

This psalm purports, by its title, to have been written by David, and there is no reason to call in question the correctness of the inscription. It is not probable that the title was given to the psalm by the author himself; but, like the other inscriptions which have occurred in many of the previous psalms, it is in the Hebrew, and was doubtless prefixed by him who made a collection of the Psalms, and expresses the current belief of the time in regard to its author. There is nothing in the psalm that is inconsistent with the supposition that David was the author, or that is incompatible with the circumstances of the occasion on which it is said to have been composed.

That occasion is said to have been when David "changed his behaviour before Abimelech." The circumstance here referred to is, undoubtedly, that which is described in 1 Sam. xxi. 10-15. David, for fear of Saul, fled to Gath, and put himself under the protection of Achish (or Abimelech), the king of Gath. It soon became known who the stranger was. The fame of David had reached Gath, and a public reference was made to him by the "servants of Achish," and to the manner in which his deeds had been celebrated among the Hebrews: "Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" 1 Sam. xxi. 11. David was apprehensive that he might be betrayed, and be delivered up by Achish to Saul, and he resorted to the device of feigning himself mad, supposing that this would be a protection; that either from pity Achish would shelter him; or, that as he would thus be considered harmless, Saul would regard it needless to secure him. He, therefore, acted like a madman, or like an idiot. He "scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." The device, though it may have saved him from being delivered up to Saul, had no other effect. Achish was unwilling to harbour a madman; and David left him, and sought a refuge in the cave of Adullam: 1 Sam. xxi. 15; xxii. 1. It is not necessary, in order to a proper understanding of the psalm, to attempt to vindicate the conduct of David in this. Perfect honesty would doubtless, in this case, as in all others, have been better in regard to the result as it is certainly better in respect to a good conscience. The question of adopting *disguises*, however, when in danger, is not one which it is always easy to determine.

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the psalm was written *at that time*, or *when* he thus "changed his behaviour." All that the language of the inscription properly expresses is, that it was with reference to that occasion, or to the danger in which he then was, or in remembrance of his feelings at the time, as he recalled them afterwards; and that it was in view of his own experience in going through that trial, and of his deliverance from that danger. In the psalm itself there is no allusion to his "change of behaviour;" and the design of David was not to celebrate that, or to vindicate that, but to celebrate the goodness of God in his deliverance as it was effected at that time. In the psalm David expresses no opinion about the measure which he adopted to secure his safety; but his heart and his lips are full of praise in view of the fact that he *was* delivered. It is, moreover, fairly implied in the inscription itself, that the psalm was composed, not at that time, but subsequently:—"A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, *who drove him away, and he departed.*" The obvious construction of

this would be that the psalm was composed *after* Abimelech had driven him away.

The *name* of the king of Gath at the time is said, in the text of the inscription or title, to have been Abimelech; in the margin, it is Achish. In 1 Sam. xxi. it is *Achish* in the text, and *Abimelech* in the margin. It is not at all improbable that he was known by both these names. His personal name was doubtless *Achish*; the hereditary name—the name by which the line of kings of Gath was known—was probably Abimelech. Thus the general, the hereditary, the family name of the kings of Egypt in early times was Pharaoh; in later times Ptolemy. In like manner the kings of Pontus had the general name of Mithridates; the Roman emperors, after the time of Julius Cæsar, were *the Cæsars*; and so, not improbably, the general name of the kings of Jerusalem may have been Adonizedek, or Melchizedek; and the name of the kings of the Amalekites, Agag. We have evidence that the general name Abimelech was given to the kings of the Philistines (Gen. xx., xxvi.) as early as the time of Abraham; and it is certainly not impossible or improbable that it became a hereditary name, like the names Pharaoh, Ptolemy, Mithridates, and Cæsar. A slight confirmation of this supposition may be derived from the signification of the name itself. It properly means *father of the king*, or *father-king*; and it might thus become a common title of the kings in Philistia. Thus, also, the term *Padisha* (Pater, Rex) is given to the kings of Persia, and the title *Atalik* (father) to the khans of Bucharia. (Gesenius, *Lex.*)

This psalm is the second of the alphabetical psalms, or the psalms in which the successive verses begin with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. See introd. to Ps. xxv. The arrangement is regular in this psalm, except that the letter ו, *Vau*, is omitted, and that, to make the number of the verses equal to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, an additional verse is appended to the end, commencing, as in the last verse of Ps. xxv., with the letter פ, *p*.

The psalm consists essentially of four parts, which, though sufficiently connected to be appropriate to the one occasion on which it was composed, are so distinct as to suggest different trains of thought.

I. An expression of thanksgiving for deliverance (vers. 1-6); concluding with the language, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." From this it has been supposed, as suggested above, that the psalm was composed *after* David had left the court of Abimelech, and not *at the time* when he was feigning madness.

II. A general statement about the privilege of confiding in God, as derived from his own experience; and an exhortation to others, founded on that experience, vers. 7-10.

III. A special exhortation to the *young* to trust in the Lord, and to pursue a life of uprightness, vers. 11-14. The psalmist professes himself able to instruct them, and he shows them that the way to attain to prosperity and to length of days is to lead a life of virtue and religion. What he had himself passed through—his deliverance in the time of trial—the recollections of his former life,—all suggested this as an invaluable lesson to the young. From this it would seem not to be improbable that the psalm was written at a considerable period after what occurred to him at the court of the king of Gath, and perhaps when he was himself growing old,—yet still in view of the events at that period of his life.

IV. A general statement that God will protect the righteous; that their interests are safe in his hands; that they may confidently rely on him; that though they may be afflicted, yet God will deliver them from their afflictions, and that he will ultimately redeem them from all their troubles, vers. 15-22.

The general purport and bearing of the psalm, therefore, is to furnish an argument for trusting in God in the time of trouble, and for leading such a life that we *may* confidently trust him as our Protector and Friend.

In the title, the words "a psalm" are not in the original. The original is simply of *David*, לְדָוִד, or *by David*,—without denoting the character of the production, whether it was to be regarded as a *psalm*, or some other species of composition. ¶ *When he changed his behaviour.* The word *behaviour* does not quite express the meaning of the original word, nor describe the fact as it is related 1 Sam. xxi. The Hebrew word — טַעַם, *taam* — means properly, *taste, flavour of food*; then intellectual taste, judgment, discernment, under-

PSALM XXXIV.

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before [1] Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

I WILL bless the LORD at all [q] times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make her boast [r] in the LORD: the [s] humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

[1] Or, *Achish*, 1 Sam. xxi. 13.
[q] Eph. v. 20. [r] 1 Cor. i. 31. [s] Ps. cxix. 74.

standing; and in this place it would literally mean, "*he changed his understanding*;" that is, he feigned himself mad. This corresponds precisely with the statement of his conduct in 1 Sam. xxi. 13. ¶ *Before Abimelech.* Marg., *Achish.* As remarked above, this latter is the proper or personal name of the king. ¶ *Who drove him away.* See 1 Sam. xxi. 15.

1. *I will bless the* LORD. I will praise him; I will be thankful for his mercies, and will always express my sense of his goodness. ¶ *At all times.* In every situation of life; in every event that occurs. The idea is, that he would do it publicly and privately; in prosperity and in adversity; in safety and in danger; in joy and in sorrow. It would be a great principle of his life, expressive of the deep feeling of his soul, that God was *always* to be regarded as an object of adoration and praise. ¶ *His praise* shall *continually* be *in my mouth.* I will be constantly uttering his praises; or, my thanks shall be unceasing. This expresses the *purpose* of the psalmist; and this is an indication of the nature of true piety. With a truly pious man the praise of God is constant; and it is an indication of true religion when a man is *disposed* always to bless God, whatever may occur. Irreligion, unbelief, scepticism, worldliness, false philosophy, murmur and complain under the trials and amidst the dark things of life; true religion, faith, love, spirituality of mind, Christian philosophy, see in God always an object of praise. Men who have no real piety, but who make pretensions to it, are disposed to praise and bless God in times of sunshine and prosperity; true piety always regards him as worthy of praise—in the storm as well as in the sunshine; in the dark night of calamity, as well as in the bright days of prosperity. Comp. Job xiii. 15.

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the* LORD. I myself will rejoice and exult in him. The word "*boast*" here refers to that on which a man would value himself; that which would be most prominent in his mind when he endeavoured to call to remembrance what he could reflect on with most pleasure. The psalmist here says that when *he* did this, it would not be wealth or strength to which he would refer; it would not be his rank or position in society; it would not be what he had done, nor what he had gained, as pertaining to this life. His joy would spring from the fact that there *was* a God; that he was *such* a God, and that he could regard him as *his* God. This would be his chief distinction—that on which he would value himself most. Of all the things that we can possess in this world, the crowning distinction is, that we have a God, and that he is such a being as he is. ¶ *The humble shall hear* thereof. The poor; the afflicted; those who are in the lower walks of life. They should hear that *he* put his trust in God, and *they* should find joy in being thus directed to God as their portion and their hope. The psalmist seems to have referred here to that class particularly, because (*a*) they would be more likely to appreciate this than those of more elevated rank, or than those who had never known affliction; and (*b*) because this would be specially fitted to impart to them support and consolation, as derived from his own experience. *He* had been in trouble. He had been encompassed with dangers. He had been mercifully protected and delivered. He was about to state how it had been done. He was sure that they who were in the circum-

3 O magnify [t] the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought [u] the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5 They [1] looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.

[t] Luke i. 46, etc.
[u] Luke xi. 9.

[1] Or, *flowed.*

stances in which he had been would welcome the truths which he was about to state, and would rejoice that there might be deliverance for them also, and that they too might find God a protector and a friend. Calamity, danger, poverty, trial, are often of eminent advantage in preparing the mind to appreciate the nature, and to prize the lessons of religion. ¶ *And be glad.* Rejoice in the story of my deliverance, since it will lead them to see that they also may find deliverance in the day of trial.

3. *O magnify the* LORD *with me.* This seems to be addressed primarily to the "humble,"—those referred to in the previous verse. As they could appreciate what he would say, as they could understand the nature of his feelings in view of his deliverance, he calls on them especially to exult with him in the goodness of God. As he and they had common calamities and trials, so might they have common joys; as they were united in danger and sorrow, so it was proper that they should be united in joy and in praise. The word *magnify* means literally *to make great,* and then, to make great in the view of the mind, or to regard and treat as great. The idea is, that he wished all, in circumstances similar to those in which he had been placed, to have a just sense of the greatness of God, and of his claims to love and praise. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 27; xl. 17; lxix. 30; lxx. 4; Luke i. 46. ¶ *And let us exalt his name together.* Let us unite in *lifting up* his name; that is, in raising it above all other things in our own estimation, and in the view of our fellow-men; in so making it known that it shall rise above every other object, that all may see and adore.

4. *I sought the* LORD, *and he heard me.* That is, on the occasion referred to in the psalm, when he was exposed to the persecutions of Saul, and when he sought refuge in the country of Abimelech or Achish: 1 Sam. xxi. The idea is, that at that time he did not confide in his own wisdom, or trust to any devices of his own, but that he sought the protection and guidance of God, alike when he fled *to* Gath, and when he fled *from* Gath. ¶ *And delivered me from all my fears.* From all that he apprehended from Saul, and again from all that he dreaded when he found that Abimelech would not harbour him, but drove him from him.

5. *They looked unto him.* That is, they who were with the psalmist. He was not alone when he fled to Abimelech; and the meaning here is, that each one of those who were with him looked to God, and found light and comfort in Him. The psalmist seems to have had his thoughts here suddenly turned from himself to those who were with him, and to have called to his remembrance how they *all* looked to God in their troubles, and how they all found relief. ¶ *And were lightened.* Or, *enlightened.* They found light. Their faces, as we should say, *brightened up,* or they became cheerful. Their minds were made calm, for they felt assured that God would protect them. Nothing could better express what often occurs in the time of trouble, when the heart is sad, and when the countenance is sorrowful,—a dark cloud apparently having come over all things,—if one thus looks to God. The burden is removed from the heart, and the countenance becomes radiant with hope and joy. The margin here, however, is, "*They flowed* unto him." The Hebrew word, נָהַר, *nahar,* means

6 This [v] poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved [w] him out of all his troubles.

v Ps. iii. 4. w 2 Sam. xxii. 1.

7 The angel [x] of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

x Heb. i. 14.

sometimes *to flow, to flow together*, Isa. ii. 2; Jer. xxxi. 12; li. 44; but it also means *to shine, to be bright;* and thence, *to be cheered, to rejoice*, Isa. lx. 5. This is probably the idea here, for this interpretation is better suited to the connexion in which the word occurs. ¶ *And their faces were not ashamed.* That is, they were not ashamed of having put their trust in God, or they were not disappointed. They had not occasion to confess that it was a vain reliance, or that they had been foolish in thus trusting him. Comp. Notes on Job vi. 20; Ps. xxii. 5; Rom. ix. 33; 1 John ii. 28. The idea here is, that they found God to be all that they expected or hoped that he would be. They had no cause to repent of what they had done. What was true of them will be true of all who put their trust in God.

6. *This poor man cried.* The psalmist here returns to his own particular experience. The emphasis here is on the word *this*: "*This* poor, afflicted, persecuted man cried." There is something much more touching in this than if he had merely said "I," or "I myself" cried. The language brings before us at once his afflicted and miserable condition. The word *poor* here—עָנִי, *ani*—does not mean "poor" in the sense of a want of wealth, but "poor" in the sense of being afflicted, crushed, forsaken, desolate. The word *miserable* would better express the idea than the word *poor*. ¶ *And the* LORD *heard* him. That is, heard in the sense of *answered*. He regarded his cry, and saved him.

7. *The angel of the* LORD. The angel whom the Lord sends, or who comes, at his command, for the purpose of protecting the people of God. This does not refer to any *particular* angel as one who was specifically called "the angel *of the Lord*," but it may refer to any one of the angels whom the Lord may commission for this purpose; and the phrase is equivalent to saying that *angels* encompass and protect the friends of God. The word *angel* properly means a *messenger*, and then is applied to those holy beings around the throne of God who are sent forth as his *messengers* to mankind; who are appointed to communicate his will, to execute his commands; or to protect his people. Comp. Notes on Matt. xxiv. 31; Job iv. 18; Heb. i. 6; John v. 4. As the word has a general signification, and would denote in itself merely a messenger, the qualification is added here that it is an "angel *of the Lord*" that is referred to, and that becomes a protector of the people of God. ¶ *Encampeth.* Literally, *pitches his tent.* Gen. xxvi. 17; Ex. xiii. 20; xvii. 1. Then the word comes to mean *to defend;* to *protect:* Zech. ix. 8. The idea here is, that the angel of the Lord protects the people of God as an army defends a country, or as such an army would be a protection. He "pitches his tent" near the people of God, and is there to guard them from danger. ¶ *About them that fear him.* His true friends, friendship for God being often denoted by the word *fear* or *reverence*. See Notes on Job i. 1. ¶ *And delivereth them.* Rescues them from danger. The psalmist evidently has his own case in view, and the general remark here is founded on his own experience. He attributes his safety from danger at the time to which he is referring, not to his own art or skill; not to the valour of his own arm, or to the prowess of his followers, but to the goodness of God in sending an angel, or a company of angels, to rescue him; and hence he infers that what was true of himself would be true of others, and that the general statement might be made

8 O taste [y] and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed [z] *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

[y] 1 Pet. ii. 3.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him.

[z] Ps. ii. 12.

which is presented in this verse. The doctrine is one that is frequently affirmed in the Scriptures. Nothing is more clearly or constantly asserted than that the angels are employed in defending the people of God; in leading and guiding them; in comforting them under trial, and sustaining them in death;—as it is also affirmed, on the other hand, that wicked angels are constantly employed in leading men to ruin. Comp. Notes on Dan. vi. 22; Heb. i. 14. See also Genesis xxxii. 1, 2; 2 Kings vi. 17; Ps. xci. 11; Luke xvi. 22; xxii. 43; John xx. 12. It may be added that no one can prove that what is here stated by the psalmist may *not* be literally true at the present time; and to *believe* that we are under the protection of angels may be as philosophical as it is pious. The most lonely, the most humble, the most obscure, and the poorest child of God, *may* have near him and around him a retinue and a defence which kings never have when their armies pitch their tents around their palaces, and when a thousand swords would at once be drawn to defend them.

8. *O taste and see.* This is an address to others, founded on the experience of the psalmist. He had found protection from the Lord; he had had evidence of his goodness; and he asks now of others that they would make the same trial which he had made. It is the language of piety in view of personal experience; and it is such language as a young convert, whose heart is filled with joy as hope first dawns on his soul, would address to his companions and friends, and to all the world around; such language as one who has had any special comfort, or who has experienced any special deliverance from temptation or from trouble, would address to others. Lessons, derived from our own experience, we may properly recommend to others; the evidence which has been furnished *us* that God is good, we may properly employ in persuading others to come and taste his love. The word *taste* here —טְעַם, *taam*—means properly to try the flavour of anything, Job xii. 11; to eat a little so as to ascertain what a thing is, 1 Sam. xiv. 24, 29, 43; Jonah iii. 7; and then to perceive by the mind, to try, to experience, Prov. xxxi. 18. It is used here in the sense of making a trial of, or testing by experience. The idea is, that by putting trust in God—by testing the comforts of religion—one would so thoroughly see or perceive the blessings of it—would have so much happiness in it—that he would be led to seek his happiness there altogether. In other words, if we could but get men to make a *trial* of religion; to enter upon it so as really to understand and experience it, we may be certain that they would have the same appreciation of it which we have, and that they would engage truly in the service of God. If those who are in danger would look to him; if sinners would believe in him; if the afflicted would seek him; if the wretched would cast their cares on him; if they who have sought in vain for happiness in the world, would seek happiness in him,—they would, one and all, so surely find what they need that they would renounce all else, and put their trust alone in God. Of this the psalmist was certain; of this all are sure who have sought for happiness in religion and in God.

"Oh make but trial of His love;
Experience will decide
How blest'd are they—and only they—
Who in His truth confide."

¶ *Blessed* is *the man* that *trusteth in him.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 12.

9. *O fear the* LORD. Reverence him; honour him; confide in him. Comp. Ps. xxxi. 23. ¶ *Ye his saints.* His holy

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

ones. All who profess to be his friends. This exhortation is addressed especially to the saints, or to the pious, because the speaker professed to be a friend of God, and had had personal experience of the truth of what he is here saying. It is the testimony of one child of God addressed to others, to encourage them by the result of his own experience. ¶ *For* there is *no want to them that fear him.* All their wants will be abundantly supplied. Sooner or later all their real necessities will be met, and God will bestow upon them every needed blessing. The statement here cannot be regarded as absolutely and universally true,—that is, it cannot mean that they who fear the Lord will never, in any instance, be hungry or thirsty, or destitute of raiment or of a comfortable home; but it is evidently intended to be a *general* affirmation, and is in accordance with the other statements which occur in the Bible about the advantages of true religion in securing temporal as well as spiritual blessings from God. Thus, in 1 Tim. iv. 8, it is said, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Thus, in Isa. xxxiii. 16, it is said of the righteous man, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." And so, in Ps. xxxvii. 25, David records the result of his own observation at the end of a long life, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." But while these statements should not be interpreted as affirming absolutely that *no* child of God will ever be in want of food, or drink, or raiment, or home, or friends, yet it is *generally* true that the wants of the righteous are supplied, often in an unexpected manner, and from an unexpected source. It *is* true that virtue and religion conduce to temporal prosperity; and it is almost universally true that the inmates of almshouses and prisons are neither the pious, nor the children of the pious. These houses are the refuge, to a great extent, of the intemperate, the godless, and the profligate,—or of the families of the intemperate, the godless, and the profligate; and if all such persons were to be discharged from those abodes, our almshouses and prisons would soon become tenantless. A community could most easily provide for *all* those who have been trained in the ways of religion, but who are reduced to poverty by fire, or by flood, or by ill health; and they would most cheerfully do it. Nothing can be more true than that if a man wished to do all that could be done in the general uncertainty of human affairs to *secure* prosperity, it would be an advantage to him to be a virtuous and religious man. God never blesses or prospers a sinner *as such*, though he often does it *notwithstanding* the fact that he is a sinner; but he does and will bless and prosper a righteous man *as such*, and *because* he is righteous. Compare Notes on 1 Tim. iv. 8.

10. *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger.* That is, they often do it, as compared with the friends of God. The allusion is especially to the *young* lions who are not able to go forth themselves in search of food. Perhaps the idea is, that they are dependent on the older lions—their parents—for the supply of their wants, as the pious are dependent on God; but that the result shows *their* reliance to be often vain, while that of the pious never is. The old lions may be unable to procure food for their young; God is never unable to provide for the wants of his children. If their wants are in any case unsupplied, it is for some other reason than because God is *unable* to meet their necessities. The word *lack* here—רוּשׁ, *rûsh*—means to be poor; to suffer want; to be needy: Prov. xiv. 20; xviii. 23. ¶ *But they that seek*

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What [a] man *is he that* desireth life, *and* loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

[a] 1 Pet. iii. 10, etc.

the LORD. That seek him as their friend; that seek his favour; that seek what they need from him. To *seek God* is a phrase which is often used to denote true piety. It means that we wish to know him; that we desire his friendship; and that we seek all our blessings from him. ¶ *Shall not want any good* thing. Any real good. God is able to supply every want; and if anything is withheld, it is always certain that it is not because God could not confer it, but because he sees some good reasons why it should not be conferred. The real good; what we most need; what will most benefit us,—will be bestowed on us; and universally it may be said of all the children of God that everything in this world and the next will be granted that is *really* for their good. They themselves are often not the best judges of what will be for their good; but God is an infallible judge in this matter, and he will certainly bestow what is best for them.

11. *Come, ye children.* From persons in general (ver. 8),—from the saints and the pious (ver. 9),—the psalmist now turns to children—to the young,—that he may state to *them* the result of his own experience, and teach them from that experience how they may find happiness and prosperity. The original word here rendered *children* properly means *sons;* but there can be no doubt that the psalmist meant to address the young in general. There is no evidence that he especially designed what is here said for his own sons. The counsel seems to have been designed for *all* the young. I see no reason for supposing, as Rosenmüller, De Wette, and Professor Alexander do, that the word is here used in the sense of *disciples, scholars, learners.* That the word *may* have such a meaning, there can be no doubt; but it is much more in accordance with the scope of the psalm to regard the word as employed in its usual sense as denoting the young. It is thus a most interesting address from an aged and experienced man of God to those who are in the morning of life—suggesting to them the way by which they may make life prosperous and happy. ¶ *Hearken unto me.* Attend to what I have to say, as the fruit of my experience and observation. ¶ *I will teach you the fear of the* LORD. I will show you what constitutes the true fear of the Lord, or what is the nature of true religion. I will teach you how you may so fear and serve God as to enjoy his favour and obtain length of days upon the earth.

12. *What man* is he that *desireth life?* That desires to live long. All men naturally love life; and all naturally desire to live long; and this desire, being founded in our nature, is not wrong. Life is, in itself, a good,—a blessing to be desired; death is in itself an evil, and a thing to be dreaded, and there is nothing wrong, in itself, in such a dread. Equally proper is it to wish *not* to be cut down in early life; for where one has before him an eternity for which to prepare, he feels it undesirable that he should be cut off in the beginning of his way. The psalmist, therefore, does not put this question because he supposes that there were any who did *not* desire life, or did *not* wish to see many days, but in order to fix the attention on the inquiry, and to prepare the mind for the answer which was to follow. By thus putting the question, also, he has implicitly expressed the opinion that it *is* lawful to desire life, and to wish to see many days. ¶ And *loveth* many *days.* Literally, *loving days.* That is, who so loves days, considered as a part of life, that he wishes they may be prolonged and multiplied. ¶ *That he*

13 Keep thy tongue from evil,
and thy lips from speaking guile.
14 Depart [b] from evil, and do
good; seek peace, [c] and pursue
it.
15 The eyes of the LORD *are*
upon the righteous, and his ears
are open unto their cry.

[b] 2 Tim. ii. 19.
[c] Matt. v. 9.

may see good. That he may enjoy prosperity, or find happiness. In other words, who is he that would desire to understand the way by which life may be lengthened out to old age, and by which it may be made happy and prosperous? The psalmist proposes to answer this question,—as he does in the following verses, by stating the results of what he had experienced and observed.

13. *Keep thy tongue from evil.* From speaking wrong things. Always give utterance to truth, and truth alone. The meaning is, that this is one of the methods of lengthening out life. To love the truth; to speak the truth; to avoid all falsehood, slander, and deceit, will contribute to this, or will be a means which will tend to prolong life, and to make it happy. ¶ *And thy lips from speaking guile.* Deceit. Do not *deceive* others by your words. Do not make any statements which are not true, or any promises which you cannot and will not keep. Do not flatter others; and do not give utterance to slander. Be a man characterised by the love of truth; and let all your words convey truth, and truth only. It cannot be doubted that this, like all other virtues, would tend to lengthen life, and to make it prosperous and peaceful. There is no vice which does not tend to abridge human life, as there is no virtue which does not tend to lengthen it. But probably the specific idea here is, that the way to avoid the enmity of other men, and to secure their favour and friendship, is to deal with them truly, and thus to live in peace with them. It is true, also, that God will bless a life of virtue and uprightness, and though there is no absolute certainty that any one, however virtuous he may be, may not be cut off in early life, yet it is also true that, other things being equal, a man of truth and integrity will be more likely to live long—(as he will be more certain to make the most of life)—than one who is false and corrupt.

14. *Depart from evil.* From all evil; from vice and crime in every form. ¶ *And do good.* Do good to all men, and in all the relations of life. ¶ *Seek peace.* Strive to live in peace with all the world. Comp. Notes on Rom. xii. 18. ¶ *And pursue it.* Follow after it. Make it an object of desire, and put forth constant efforts to live in peace with all men. There can be no doubt that this is appropriate advice to one who wishes to lengthen out his days. We have only to remember how many are cut down by indulging in a quarrelsome, litigious, and contentious spirit,—by seeking revenge,—by quarrels, duels, wars, and strife,—to see the wisdom of this counsel.

15. *The eyes of the* LORD are *upon the righteous.* This is another of the ways in which the psalmist says that life will be lengthened out, or that those who desire life may find it. The Lord will be the protector of the righteous; he will watch over and defend them. See Notes on Job xxxvi. 7. ¶ *And his ears* are open *unto their cry.* That is, when in trouble and in danger. He will hear them, and will deliver them. All this seems to be stated as the result of the experience of the psalmist himself; *he* had found that the eyes of God had been upon him in his dangers, and that His ears had been open when he called upon Him (ver. 6); and now, from his own experience, he assures others that the way to secure life and to find prosperity is to pursue such a course as will ensure the favour and protection of God. The general thought is, that virtue

16 The face [d] of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, [e] and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

d Ezek. xiv. 7, 8. *e* Isa. lxv. 24.

and religion,—the love of truth, and the love of peace,—the favour and friendship of God, will tend to lengthen out life, and to make it prosperous and happy. All the statements in the Bible concur in this, and all the experience of man goes to confirm it.

16. *The face of the* LORD. This phrase is synonymous with that in the previous verse: "The eyes of the Lord." The meaning is, that the righteous and the wicked are alike under the eye of God; the one for protection, the other for punishment. Neither of them can escape his notice; but at all times, and in all circumstances, they are equally seen by him. ¶ Is *against them that do evil.* The wicked; all that do wrong. In the former verse the statement is, that the eyes of the Lord are "*upon*" the righteous, that is, for their protection;—in this case, by a change of the preposition in the original, the statement is, that his face is "*against*" them that do evil, that is, he observes them to bring judgment upon them. ¶ *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* To cut off themselves,—their families,—and all memorials of them, so that they shall utterly be forgotten among men. Comp. Ps. cix. 13—15. So, in Prov. x. 7, it is said, "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." Two things are implied here: (1) That it is *desirable* to be remembered after we are dead. There is in us a deep-rooted principle, of great value to the cause of virtue, which prompts us to *desire* that we may be held in grateful recollection by mankind after we have passed away; that is, which prompts us to do something in our lives, the remembrance of which the world will not "willingly let die." *Milton.*—(2) The other idea is, that there is a tendency to cause the remembrance of the wicked to die out, or to make men forget them. There is nothing to make men desire to retain their recollection, or to rear monuments to them. Men *are* indeed remembered who are of bad eminence in crime; but the world will forget a wicked man just as soon as it can. This is stated here as a reason particularly addressed to the young (ver. 11) why *they* should seek God, and pursue the ways of righteousness. The motive is, that men will *gladly* retain the remembrance of those who are good; of those who have done anything worthy to be remembered, but that a life of sin will make men desire to forget as soon as possible all those who practise it. This is not a low and base motive to be addressed to the young. That is a high and honourable principle which makes us wish that our names should be cherished by those who are to live after us, and is one of the original principles by which God keeps up virtue in the world,—one of those arrangements, those safeguards of virtue, by which we are prompted to do right, and to abstain from that which is wrong. It is greatly perverted, indeed, to purposes of ambition, but, in itself, the desire not to be forgotten when we are dead contributes much to the industry, the enterprise, and the benevolence of the world, and is one of the most efficacious means for preserving us from sin.

17. The righteous *cry, and the* LORD *heareth.* That is, one of the advantages or benefits of being righteous is the privilege of crying unto God, or of calling on his name, with the assurance that he will hear and deliver us. No one has ever yet fully appreciated the *privilege* of being permitted to call upon God; the privilege of prayer. There is no bless-

18 The LORD *is* [1] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth [2] such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

[1] *to the broken of heart.*
[2] *the contrite of spirit.*

ing conferred on man in his present state superior to this; and no one can fully understand the force of the argument derived from this in favour of the service of God. What a world would this be—how sad, how helpless, how wretched—if there were no God to whom the guilty, the suffering, and the sorrowful might come; if God were a Being who never heard prayer at all; if he were a capricious Being who might or might not hear prayer; if he were a Being governed by fitful emotions, who would now hear the righteous, and then the wicked, and then neither, and who dispensed his favours in answer to prayer by no certain rule! ¶ *And delivereth them out of all their troubles.* (1.) He often delivers them from trouble in this life in answer to prayer. (2.) He will deliver them literally from "all" trouble in the life to come. The promise is not, indeed, that they shall be delivered from *all* trouble on earth, but the idea is that God is able to rescue them from trouble here; that he often does it in answer to prayer; and that there will be, in the case of every righteous person, a sure and complete deliverance from all trouble hereafter. Comp. Notes on ver. 6: see ver. 19.

18. *The* LORD is *nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *to the broken of heart.* The phrase, "*the Lord is nigh,*" means that he is ready to hear and to help. The language is, of course, figurative. As an Omnipresent Being, God is equally near to all persons at all times; but the language is adapted to our conceptions, as we feel that one who is near us can help us, or that one who is distant from us cannot give us aid. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 11. The phrase, "them that are of a broken heart," occurs often in the Bible. It refers to a condition when a burden *seems* to be on the heart, and when the heart *seems* to be crushed by sin or sorrow; and it is designed to describe a consciousness of deep guilt, or the heaviest kind of affliction and trouble. Comp. Ps. li. 17; Isa. lvii. 15; lxi. 1; lxvi. 2. ¶ *And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *contrite of spirit.* The phrase here means the spirit as *crushed* or *broken down;* that is, as in the other phrase, a spirit that is oppressed by sin or trouble. The world abounds with instances of those who can fully understand this language.

19. *Many* are *the afflictions of the righteous.* This is not intended to affirm that the afflictions of the righteous are more numerous or more severe than the afflictions of other men, but that they *are* subjected to much suffering, and to many trials. Religion does not exempt them *from* suffering, but it sustains them *in* it; it does not deliver them from all trials in this life, but it supports them in their trials, which it teaches them to consider as a preparation for the life to come. There are, indeed, sorrows which are peculiar to the righteous, or which come upon them in virtue of their religion, as the trials of persecution; but there are sorrows, also, that are peculiar to the wicked,—such as are the effects of intemperance, dishonesty, crime. The latter are more numerous by far than the former; so that it is still true that the wicked suffer more than the righteous in this life. ¶ *But the* LORD *delivereth him out of them all.* See Notes on ver. 17.

20. *He keepeth all his bones.* That is, he preserves or guards the righteous. ¶ *Not one of them is broken.*

21 Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be [1] desolate.

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none [f] of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

[1] Or, *guilty.* [f] Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

Perhaps there is a direct and immediate allusion here to what the psalmist had himself experienced. In *his* dangers God had preserved him, so that he had escaped without a broken bone. But the statement is more general, and is designed to convey a truth in respect to the usual and proper effect of religion, or to denote the advantage, in reference to personal safety in the dangers of this life, derived from religion. The language is of a *general* character, such as often occurs in the Scriptures, and it should, in all fairness, be so construed. It cannot mean that the bones of a righteous man are *never* broken, or that the fact that a man has a broken bone proves that he is not righteous; but it means that, as a general principle, religion conduces to safety, or that the righteous are under the protection of God. Comp. Matt. x. 30, 31. Nothing more can be demanded in the fair interpretation of the language than this.

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked.* That is, his own wicked conduct will be the cause of his destruction. His ruin is not arbitrary, or the mere result of a Divine appointment; it is caused by sin, and is the regular and natural consequence of guilt. In the destruction of the sinner, there will not be any one thing which cannot be explained by the supposition that it is the regular effect of sin, or what sin is, in its own nature, fitted to produce. The one will measure the other; guilt will be the measure of all that there is *in* the punishment. ¶ *And they that hate the righteous.* Another term for the wicked, or a term designating the character of the wicked in one aspect or view. It is true of all the wicked that they must hate the righteous in their hearts, or that they are so opposed to the character of the righteous that it is proper to designate this feeling as *hatred.* ¶ *Shall be desolate.* Margin, *shall be guilty.* Professor Alexander and Hengstenberg render this, as in the margin, *shall be guilty.* De Wette, *shall repent.* Rosenmüller, *shall be condemned.* The original word—אָשַׁם, *asham*—means properly to fail in duty, to transgress, to be guilty. The primary idea, says Gesenius (*Lex.*), is that of *negligence*, especially in going, or in gait, as of a camel that is slow or faltering. Then the word means to be held or treated as faulty or guilty; and then, to bear the consequences of guilt, or to be punished. This seems to be the idea here. The word is sometimes synonymous with another Hebrew word— יָעַם, *yasham*—meaning to be desolate; to be destroyed; to be laid waste: Ezek. vi. 6; Joel i. 18; Ps. v. 10. But the usual meaning of the word is undoubtedly retained here, as signifying that, in the dealings of Providence, or in the administering of Divine government, such men will be held to be guilty, and will be treated accordingly; that is, that they will be punished.

22. *The* LORD *redeemeth the soul of his servants.* The literal meaning of this is, that the Lord rescues the lives of his servants, or that he saves them from death. The word *redeem* in its primary sense means to let go or loose; to *buy* loose, or to ransom; and hence, to redeem with a price, or to rescue in any way. Here the idea is not that of delivering or rescuing by a *price*, or by an offering, but of rescuing from danger and death by the interposition of the power and providence of God. The word *soul* here is used to denote the entire man, and the idea is, that God will *rescue* or *save* those who serve and obey him. They will be kept from destruction. They will not be held and

regarded as guilty, and will not be treated as if they were wicked. As the word *redeem* is used by David here it means God will save his people;—without specifying the *means* by which it will be done. As the word *redeem* is used by Christians now, employing the ideas of the New Testament on the subject, it means that God will redeem his people by that great sacrifice which was made for them on the cross. ¶ *And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.* Shall be held and treated as *guilty.* See ver. 21, where the same word occurs in the original. They shall not be held to be guilty; they shall not be punished. This is designed to be in contrast with the statement respecting the wicked in ver. 21. The psalm, therefore, closes appropriately with the idea that they who trust the Lord will be ultimately safe; that God will make a distinction between them and the wicked; that they will be ultimately rescued from death, and be regarded and treated for ever as the friends of God.

PSALM XXXV.

This psalm is ascribed to David. The title in the original, לְדָוִד — "*by* David," or, "*of* David"—is without anything to designate the occasion on which it was composed, or anything to mark the character of the psalm, as distinguished from others. Occasionally in the titles of the psalms there is a special reference to the circumstances in which the psalm was composed, as in Ps. iii., vii., xviii., xxx., xxxiv.; and, much more frequently, there is something added in the title to distinguish the character of the psalm, either in its own nature, or in its adaptedness to music, as in Ps. iv., v., vi., ix., xvi., xxii. In this case, however, there is nothing in the title that furnishes any information on either of these points.

There is nothing in the psalm itself that will enable us to determine with any accuracy the occasion on which it was written. By some it has been referred to the time of the persecution of David by Saul; by others, to the opposition which he encountered from Ahithophel, or Shimei, or to the ingratitude of Mephibosheth (2 Sam. xvi. 3); by others it has been referred to the rebellion of Absalom; and others have referred it to the Messiah, as prophetically descriptive of what would occur to him. The psalm can be intelligently interpreted on either of the former suppositions, but there is no evidence that it had any direct reference to the Messiah. The only place in the New Testament in which it could be alleged that any part of it is applied to Christ, is John xv. 25, where it is said, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." By those who suppose that the psalm refers to the Messiah, it is said that this is a quotation from ver. 19 of this psalm. But it may be remarked in regard to this (*a*) that the language of the psalm in that verse is different from that used in John, the language of the former being, "Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause;" and (*b*) that the language in John is a much more literal quotation from Ps. lxix. 4, "They that hate me without a cause," etc.,—a psalm which undoubtedly has reference to the Messiah. De Wette supposes that the psalm is not properly ascribed to David, and says that it is not "worthy" of him. He supposes that it was composed after the death of David, by an inferior poet. He furnishes, however, no reason for this opinion, except that which is derived from his own feelings,—"*nach meinem Gefühle.*' The time and occasion on which the psalm was composed are not, however, of material consequence. As it would be appropriate to any of the occasions above referred to, so it is appropriate to numerous occasions which arise in the history of individuals; and it is, therefore, of so general a character that it may be useful in the church at all times.

What is apparent in the psalm—the central idea, and that which makes it so useful—is, that it was composed with reference to the treatment which the author received from those who had been his professed friends:—from those to whom he had shown kindness in their troubles; to whom he had been a friend and a brother, but who had now turned against him. In the times of prosperity they had been his professed friends, and had partaken freely and largely of his hospitality; when they were afflicted he had shown them sympathy and kindness; but when reverses

PSALM XXXV.

A Psalm of David.

PLEAD [g] *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

[g] Lam. iii. 58.

came upon him, they forsook him, and joined with his calumniators, persecutors, and accusers. The psalm, therefore, has a special applicability to trials of that nature. It expresses the feelings and views of the author in regard to his own sorrows, as springing from such ingratitude, and his earnest prayer to God to interpose in his behalf,—the rolling of the sorrows of his pained and oppressed heart upon the arm of his unchanging Friend, the mighty and merciful God. As occasions similar to those referred to in the psalm not unfrequently occur in the world, it was important that in the volume of inspiration an *example* should be furnished of the manner in which piety is to meet such a form of trial.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. The prayer, vers. 1-10. This is (*a*) an earnest appeal to God for his interposition, vers. 1-3; (*b*) a solemn imprecation of Divine vengeance on his enemies, or a prayer that they may receive from the hand of God just retribution for their crimes, vers. 4-8; (*c*) the expression of a determined purpose on his part to triumph in God, or to ascribe praise to God for his interposition, vers. 9, 10.

II. The description of the character and conduct of his enemies, vers. 11-16. They were (*a*) false witnesses against him, or calumniators, ver. 11; (*b*) they had rendered to him evil for good, or had been guilty of base ingratitude, ver. 12; (*c*) in their troubles he had been to them as a brother, vers. 13, 14; but (*d*) they had forgotten all this in his adversity, and had united with the vile and the abandoned—with revellers and drunkards, in pouring contempt on his name, and in reproaching his character, vers. 15, 16.

III. An earnest appeal to God, in view of these circumstances, to interpose and deliver him; to show that He was the patron and friend of those who were calumniated and injured, vers. 17-28. This appeal is founded on such arguments as the following:—(*a*) That God *seemed* now to be looking on, and taking no interest in a righteous cause, or in the cause of one who was oppressed and wronged, ver. 17; (*b*) that his interposition would lead the psalmist to render him praise, ver. 18; (*c*) that those who had so much injured and wronged him seemed to enjoy the Divine favour, and were at ease, vers. 19, 20; (*d*) that God had seen all this, and still saw it, and that it became him to interpose in his behalf, vers. 21-23; (*e*) that it was inconsistent for God to suffer the wicked to triumph over the righteous, or that they should be allowed to exult as if they had swallowed them up, vers. 24-26; and (*f*) that it was desirable that, under the government of God, they who were truly righteous should receive such tokens of the Divine favour and protection that they could rejoice in God, and render him appropriate praise, vers. 27, 28.

1. *Plead* my cause, O LORD. The word *plead* means, properly, to argue in support of a claim, or against the claim of another; to urge reasons for or against; to attempt to persuade one by argument or supplication;—as, to plead for the life of a criminal, that is, to urge reasons why he should be acquitted or pardoned; and then, to supplicate with earnestness in any way. The original word here used, —רִיב, *rib*—meads to contend, strive, quarrel; and then, to contend before a judge, to manage or plead a cause. The idea here is, that the psalmist desires that God would undertake his cause *against* those who had risen up against him, *as if* it were managed before a tribunal, or before a judge, and God should be the advocate. The same word is used, in another form, in the other member of the sentence—"with them that *strive* —יְרִיבָי—against me." The idea is, that *they* were *pleading* against him, or were urging arguments, as it were, before a tribunal or a judge, why he should be condemned. They were his bitter opponents, engaged in bringing all manner of false accusations against him, and seeking his condemnation. The psalmist felt that he could not

2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

3 Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.

manage his own cause against them; and he, therefore, pleads with God that *he* would interpose, and stand up for him. ¶ *Fight against them that fight against me.* The same idea substantially occurs here as in the former member of the verse. It is a prayer that *God* would undertake his cause; that he would exert his power against those who were opposed to him.

2. *Take hold of shield and buckler.* That is, Arm thyself as if for the contest. It is a prayer, in a new form, that God would interpose, and that he would go forth as a warrior against the enemies of the psalmist. On the word *shield,* see Notes on Ps. v. 12. Comp. Notes on Eph. vi. 16. On the word *buckler,* see Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. These terms are derived from the armour of a warrior, and the prayer here is that God would appear in that character for his defence. ¶ *And stand up for my help.* As a warrior stands up, or stands firm, to arrest the attack of an enemy.

3. *Draw out also the spear.* The word here rendered *draw out* means properly to pour out; to empty; and it is applied to the act of emptying sacks, Gen. xlii. 35; to emptying bottles, Jer. xlviii. 12; to drawing a sword from a sheath, Ex. xv. 9; Lev. xxvi. 33; Ezek. v. 12. It is applied to a *spear* either as drawing it out of the place where it was kept, or as stretching it out for the purposes of attack. The former probably is the meaning, and the idea is, that David prayed God to *arm himself*—as a warrior does—in order to defend him. The spear was a common weapon in ancient warfare. It was sometimes so short that it could be brandished as a sword in the hand, or hurled at an enemy, 1 Sam. xviii. 11; xix. 10; xx. 33; but it was usually made as long as it could be to be handled conveniently. The spear was a weapon of *attack.* The parts of armour referred to in ver. 2 were designed for defence. The idea of the psalmist is that of a warrior prepared alike for attack or defence. ¶ *And stop* the way *against them that persecute me.* The words *the way* are not in the original. The word rendered *stop*—סְגֹר, *segor*—means properly to shut, to close, as a door or gate, Job iii. 10; 1 Sam. i. 5; Gen. xix. 6, 10. The idea here, according to the usage of the word, is, Shut or close up the way against those that persecute me. So Gesenius renders it. Grotius, Michaelis, De Wette, and others, however, regard the word as a noun, signifying the same as the Greek—σάγαρις—a two-edged sword, such as was used by the Scythians, Persians, and Amazons. Herod. vii. 64. See Rosenmüller *in loc.* It is not so rendered, however, in any of the ancient versions. The LXX. render it, "And shut up against those that persecute me;" the Vulgate, "Pre-occupy against those that persecute me;" the Chaldee, "Shut up against those that persecute me." The correct idea probably is that which is given in the common version. The psalmist prays that God would go forth to meet his enemies; that he would arrest and check them in their march; that he would hedge up their way, and that he would thus prevent them from attacking him. ¶ *Say unto my soul, I* am *thy salvation.* Say to *me,* I will save you. That is, Give me some assurance that thou wilt interpose, and that thou wilt guard me from my enemies. Man only wants this assurance to be calm in respect to any danger. When God says to us that he will be our salvation; that he will protect us; that he will deliver us from sin, from danger, from hell, the mind may and will be perfectly calm. To a believer he gives this assurance; to all he is willing to give it. The

4 Let [h] them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

5 Let them be as chaff [i] before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase *them.*

6 Let their way be [1] dark and slippery; and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul.

h Ps. lxxi. 24. *i* Ps. i. 4.
[1] *darkness and slipperiness.*

whole plan of salvation is arranged with a view to furnish such an assurance, and to give a pledge to the soul that God *will* save. Death loses its terrors then; the redeemed man moves on calmly, — for in all the future—in all worlds—he has nothing now to fear.

4. *Let them be confounded.* That is, Let them, through thy gracious interposition in my behalf, be so entirely overcome and subdued that they shall be *ashamed* that they ever made the effort to destroy me; let them see so manifestly that God is on my side that they will be covered with confusion for having opposed one who was so entirely the object of the Divine protection and care. See Notes on Ps. vi. 10; xxv. 2, 3. Comp. Notes on Job vi. 20. ¶ *That seek after my soul.* My life. That seek to destroy me. ¶ *Let them be turned back.* In their attempts to pursue me. Do thou interpose and turn them back. ¶ *And brought to confusion.* Put to shame; or made ashamed,—as they are who are disappointed and thwarted in their schemes.

5. *Let them be as chaff before the wind.* As chaff is driven away in winnowing grain. See Notes on Ps. i. 4. ¶ *And let the angel of the* LORD *chase* them. Drive them away, or scatter them. Angels are often represented in the Scriptures as agents employed by God in bringing punishment on wicked men. See 2 Kings xix. 35; Isa. xxxvii. 36; 1 Chron. xxi. 12, 30; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16.

6. *Let their way be dark.* Marg., as in Heb., *darkness.* That is, let them not be able to see where they go; what danger they incur; what is before them. The idea is that of persons who wander in the night, not knowing what is before them, or what danger may be near. The succession of images and figures here is terrific. The representation is that of persons scattered as the chaff is before the wind; pursued by the angel seeking vengeance; and driven along a dark and slippery path, with no guide, and no knowledge as to the precipices which may be before them, or the enemies that may be pressing upon them. ¶ *And slippery.* Marg., as in Heb., *slipperiness.* This is a circumstance which adds increased terror to the image. It is not only a *dark* road, but a road made slippery by rains; a road where they are in danger every moment of sliding down a precipice where they will be destroyed. ¶ *And let the angel of the* LORD *persecute them.* Pursue or follow them. The word *persecute* we use now in the sense of subjecting one to pain, torture, or privation, on account of his religious opinions. This is not the meaning of the word used here. It is simply to *follow* or *pursue.* The image is that of the avenging angel following on, or pursuing them in this dark and slippery way; a flight in a dark and dangerous path, with a destroying angel close in the rear.

7. *For without cause have they hid for me their net* in *a pit.* See Notes on Ps. vii. 15; ix. 15. This figure is derived from hunting. The idea is that of digging a pit or hole for a wild beast to fall into, with a net so concealed that the animal could not see it, and that might be suddenly drawn over him so as to secure him. The reference here is to plans that are laid to entrap and ruin others; plots that

8 Let destruction [k] come upon him [1] at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest [l] the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

[1] which *he knoweth not of.*
[k] 1 Thess. v. 3. [l] Prov. xxii. 22, 23.

are concocted so as to secure destruction before one is aware. The psalmist says that, in his case, they had done this without *cause*, or without any sufficient reason. He had done them no wrong; he had given them no show of excuse for their conduct. ¶ Which *without cause they have digged for my soul.* For my life. That is, they have digged a pit into which I might fall, and into which they designed that I should fall, though I have never done anything to give them occasion thus to seek my destruction.

8. *Let destruction come upon him at unawares.* Marg., which *he knoweth not of.* So the Hebrew. The meaning is, Let destruction come upon him when he is not looking for it, or expecting it. ¶ *And let his net that he hath hid catch himself.* See Notes on Ps. vii. 15, 16. The psalmist prays here that the same thing may occur to his enemy which his enemy had designed for him. It is simply a prayer that they might be treated as they purposed to treat him.

9. *And my soul shall be joyful in the* LORD. That is, *I* shall be joyful, or will rejoice. This is said in anticipation of the interposition of God in destroying his enemies, and in delivering him from danger. It is not joy in the destruction of others; it is joy that he himself would be delivered. Our own deliverance from the hand of our enemies *may* involve the necessity of their being cut off. What we rejoice in, in such a case, is not their ruin, but our own deliverance; and for this it can never be improper to give thanks. The psalmist says that he would rejoice *in the Lord.* It would not be in his own skill or valour, but in what God had done to save him. See Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 2. ¶ *It shall rejoice in his salvation.* For the salvation or deliverance that he brings to me.

10. *All my bones shall say.* A similar expression occurs in Ps. li. 8: "That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." The *bones* are here put for the frame; the whole man. See Notes on Ps. xxxii. 3. The idea is, that he had been crushed and overborne with trouble and danger, so that his very frame—that which sustained him—had given way. He says now that if God would interpose in the manner which he prays for, he would be relieved of the insupportable burden, and his whole nature would rejoice. ¶ *Who is like unto thee.* Who can bring deliverance like God. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 18. ¶ *Which deliverest the poor,* etc. Who rescues the poor from the hand of the mighty. That is, (*a*) who is there that *would* interpose as God does in behalf of the poor and the down-trodden? (*b*) who is there that *could* save them as he does? In his power, and in his willingness to aid, there is no one like God. The word rendered *poor* here rather means one who is afflicted, or crushed by trial. ¶ *Yea, the poor and the needy.* The word here rendered *poor* is the same as that which occurs in the former member of the sentence. The word rendered *needy* is that which is commonly used to denote the *poor* in the usual sense of the term—one who is in want. The reference is to David, who was afflicted by persecution, and at the same time was in want of the comforts of life. ¶ *From him that spoileth him.* From him that would plunder and rob him.

11 [1] False witnesses [m] did rise up: they [2] laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.

12 They rewarded me evil for good, *to* the [3] spoiling of my soul.

[1] *witnesses of wrong.*

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I [4] humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

m Ps. xxvii. 12; Matt. xxvi. 59—61.
[2] *asked me.* [3] *depriving.* [4] Or, *afflicted.*

11. *False witnesses did rise up.* Marg., *witnesses of wrong.* The Hebrew is, "witnesses of *violence*," חָמָס, *hamas.* That is, they were persons who, in what they said of me, were guilty of injustice and wrong. Their conduct was injurious to me as an act of *violence* would be. ¶ *They laid to my charge.* Marg., as in Heb., *they asked me.* The word *asked* here seems to be used in the sense of *demand;* that is, they demanded an *answer* to what was said. The usage appears to have been derived from courts, where the forms of trial may have been in the way of question and answer,—the mode of accusation having been in the form of *asking* how a thing was, or whether it was so; and the defence being regarded as an *answer* to such an inquiry. Hence it is synonymous with our expression of laying to the charge of any one; or of accusing any one. ¶ Things *that I knew not.* Of which I had no knowledge; which never came into my mind. What those charges were the psalmist does not specify; but it is not uncommon for a good man to be falsely accused, and we are certain that such things occurred in the life of David.

12. *They rewarded me evil for good.* They recompensed, or returned evil instead of good. The manner in which they did it he states in the following verses. ¶ To *the spoiling of my soul.* Marg., *depriving.* The Hebrew word means *the being forsaken,* or *abandoned.* The idea is, that owing to this conduct he was forsaken or abandoned by all in whom he might have put confidence.

13. *But as for me.* The psalmist now contrasts their conduct with his own. He refers to the recollections of his past life, and to the acts of kindness which he had shown to them in times of trouble, as more deeply marking the evils of their own conduct now. ¶ *When they were sick.* Comp. Notes on Job xxx. 25. It would seem from this that the persons referred to, who now treated him with so much ingratitude, were those with whom he had been formerly intimately associated, or whom he had regarded as his personal friends, since it cannot be supposed that this deep sympathy would have been shown for those who were altogether strangers to him. ¶ *My clothing* was *sackcloth.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxx. 11. The meaning is, that he showed the deepest sympathy in their distress by putting on the emblems of humiliation or mourning. It was also with reference to prayer in their behalf, and to fasting, that he put on these marks of grief. The idea is, that he did all that was understood to be connected with the deepest humiliation before God, and that would fit the mind for earnest prayer in their behalf. He felt that their restoration to health—that the preservation of their lives—depended on God, and he most earnestly and fervently pleaded in their behalf. ¶ *I humbled my soul with fasting.* Marg., *afflicted;* so the Hebrew properly means. The word *soul* here is equivalent to *self;* I afflicted myself. He subjected himself to the pains of hunger, that he might be better prepared to offer fervent and acceptable prayer. Among the Hebrews fasting and prayer were much more closely connected than they are with Christians. See Dan. ix. 3; Matt. xvii. 21; Luke ii. 37. ¶ *And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.* De Wette explains this

14 I [1] behaved myself [2] as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

[1] *walked.*
[2] *as a friend, as a brother to me.*

as meaning, "I prayed with my head sunk on my bosom;" that is, with the head bowed down, so that the prayer which went out of his lips seemed to return again to his own bosom—that earnest prayer which one offers when the head is bowed with sorrow. A posture somewhat similar to this is referred to in the case of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 42: "And he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." The posture of prayer with the head reclining towards the bosom is common among the Mohammedans, *Reland* de Religione Mohammetica, p. 87. Jarchi explains this as meaning that he sought the same for those who were now his enemies which he would for himself, or that he desired that that should come into his own bosom which he sought for them. Prof. Alexander supposes that this means, according to a traditional interpretation of the Jews, that he desired that the prayer which he offered might redound to his own advantage: "My prayer shall not be lost, it shall return in blessings to the heart which prompted it." There can be no reason to doubt that this is true *in fact;* and that prayer offered for others *does* bring back blessings to those who offer it. But to suppose that this was the *motive* in the case is to suppose that the psalmist was wholly selfish, and would take away the very point of his observation about his prayer—that it was dictated by the sincerest love for them and true sympathy for their sufferings. The most simple interpretation, therefore, is that which supposes that the prayer was offered under such a burden of grief on account of their sufferings, that his head sank on his bosom; or, in other words, that the prayer which was offered was such as is presented when the heart is most burdened and most sad.

14. *I behaved myself.* Marg., as in Heb., *I walked.* The word *walk,* in the Scriptures, is often used to denote a course of conduct; the way in which a man lives and acts: Phil. iii. 18; Gal. ii. 14; 1 Thes. iv. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 11. It is not improperly rendered here, *I behaved myself.* ¶ *As though* he had been *my friend* or *brother.* Marg., as in Heb., *as a friend, as a brother to me.* This shows that these persons were not his near *relations,* but that they were his intimate friends, or were supposed to be so. He felt and acted towards them as though they had been his nearest relations. ¶ *I bowed down heavily.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "Squalid I bowed down." The word rendered "I bowed down" refers to the condition of one who is oppressed with grief, or who sinks under it. All have felt this effect of grief, when the head is bowed; when the frame is bent; when one under the pressure throws himself on a couch or on the ground. The word rendered *heavily* — קֹדֵר, *kodair* — is derived from a word — קָדַר, *kadar* — which means to be turbid or foul, as a torrent: Job vi. 16; and then, to mourn, or to go about in filthy garments or sackcloth as mourners: Job v. 11; Jer. xiv. 2; Ps. xxxviii. 6; xlii. 9; and then, to be of a dirty, dusky colour, as the skin is that is scorched by the sun: Job xxx. 28. It is rendered *black* in Jer. iv. 28; viii. 21; 1 Kings xviii. 45; Jer. xiv. 2; *blackish,* Job vi. 16; *dark,* Joel ii. 10; Micah iii. 6; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; *darkened,* Joel iii. 15; *mourn* and *mourning,* Job v. 11; xxx. 28; Ps. xxxviii. 6; xlii. 9; xliii. 2; Ezek. xxxi. 15; and *heavily* only in this place. The *idea* here is that of one appearing in the usual aspect and habiliments of mourning. He had a sad countenance; he had put on the garments that were indicative of grief; and thus he

15 But in mine [1] adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; *yea*, the abjects [n] gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me*, and ceased not.

[1] *halting.*

[n] Job xxx. 1, 8, etc.

walked about. ¶ *As one that mourneth* for his *mother.* The psalmist here evidently designs to illustrate the depth of his own sorrow by a reference to the deepest kind of grief which we ever experience. The sorrow for a mother is peculiar, and there is no grief which a man feels more deeply or keenly than this. We have but one mother to lose, and thousands of most tender recollections come into the memory when she dies. While she lived we had always *one* friend to whom we could tell everything,—to whom we could communicate all our joys, and of whose sympathy we were certain in all our sorrows, however trivial in their own nature they might be. Whoever might be indifferent to us, whoever might turn away from us in our troubles, whoever might feel that our affairs were not worth regarding, we were sure that *she* would not be the one; we were always certain that she would feel an interest in whatever concerned us. Even those things which we felt could be scarcely worth a father's attention we could freely communicate to her, for we were sure there was nothing that pertained to us that was too insignificant for her to regard, and we went and freely told all to her. And then, how much has a mother done for us! All the ideas that we have of tenderness, affection, self-denial, patience, and gentleness, are closely connected with the recollection of a mother, for we have, in our early years, seen more of these things in her than in perhaps all other persons together. Though, therefore, we weep when a father dies, and though, in the formation of our character, we may have been more indebted to him than to her, yet our grief for him when he dies is different from that which we feel when a mother dies. We, indeed, reverence and honour and love him, but we are conscious of quite a different feeling from that which we have when a mother is removed by death.

15. *But in mine adversity they rejoiced.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *halting.* That is, when reverses and troubles came upon me; when, in my journey of life, I seemed to stumble. ¶ *And gathered themselves together.* Not to help me, but to oppose me, and to deride me. ¶ Yea, *the abjects gathered themselves together against me.* The word rendered *abjects* — נְכִים, *naichim* — has been very variously rendered. The LXX. render it μάστιγες, *scourges;* so the Vulgate, *flagella.* Our translators evidently regarded it as meaning the low, the vile, the outcasts of society; but this idea is not necessarily implied in the Hebrew word. The word used here is derived from a verb—נָכָה, *nachah*—which means to smite, to strike, to beat; and it would be correctly rendered in this place, *those smiting,* or *beating:—the smiters.* But probably the allusion is to the *tongue*—to those who, as it were, smite or beat with the tongue; that is, who rail or revile: those who are slanderous. Compare Jer. xviii. 18; Gesenius (*Lex.*). Others have supposed that it means *lame;* that is, those who limp or halt—meaning that all classes of persons gathered themselves together. But probably the true idea is that which is expressed above, that he was surrounded by slanderers and revilers. ¶ *And I knew* it *not.* Hebrew, "I knew not;" that is, I knew nothing of what they accused me of; I was wholly ignorant of the charges brought against me. See Notes on ver. 11. ¶ *They did tear* me. See Notes on Job xvi. 9. The idea here is that they *tore* or *rent* with words; or, as we say in English, they "tore him in pieces;" that is, they railed at, or reviled him, tearing his character in pieces. ¶ *And ceased not.* It was not one act only;

16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed [o] upon me with their teeth.

[o] Lam. ii. 16; Acts vii. 54.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my [l] darling from the [p] lions.

[l] *only one.*

[p] Ps. xxii. 20.

it was continuous and unceasing. They did it when alone; and they gathered themselves together to do it; they countenanced and encouraged one another.

16. *With hypocritical mockers in feasts.* The word rendered *hypocritical* here—חָנֵף, *hhanaiph*—properly means men *profane, impious, abandoned.* It refers to such persons as are commonly found in scenes of revelry. The words rendered "mockers at feasts," it is scarcely possible to render literally. The word translated, "*mockers,*"—לָעַג, *Laaig*—means properly one who stammers, or who speaks a foreign language; then, a jester, mocker, buffoon. The word rendered *feasts*—מָעוֹג, *Maog*—means *a cake of bread;* and the whole phrase would denote *cake-jesters; table-buffoons*—those, perhaps, who act the part of jesters at the tables of the rich for the sake of good eating. *Gesenius.*—The meaning is, that he was exposed to the ribaldry or jesting of that low class of men; that those with whom he had formerly been on friendly terms, and whom he had admitted to his own table, and for whom he had wept in their troubles, now drew around themselves that low and vulgar class of parasites and buffoons for the purpose of ridiculing or deriding him. ¶ *They gnashed upon me with their teeth.* The act of gnashing with the teeth is expressive of anger or wrath. See Notes on Job xvi. 9; comp. Matt. viii. 12; xiii. 42, 50; xxii. 13; xxiv. 51; xxv. 30; Luke xiii. 28. The meaning here is that they connected the expressions of anger or wrath with those of derision and scorn. The one is commonly not far from the other.

17. *Lord, how long wilt thou look on?* How long wilt thou witness this without interposing to deliver me, and to punish those who treat me thus? God saw it all. He was able to save him that was thus persecuted and opposed. And yet he did not interpose. He *seemed* to pay no attention to it. He *appeared* to be indifferent to it. The psalmist, therefore, asks *how long* this was to continue. He did not doubt that God *would,* at some time, interpose and save him; but what was so mysterious to him was the fact that he looked so calmly on,—that he saw it all, and that he did not interpose when he could so easily do it. The same question we may now ask, and may constantly ask, in regard to the wickedness in the world,—*and no one can answer it.* No one can tell why God, when he sees the state of things on earth, *is* so calm (comp. Notes on Isa. xviii. 4), and apparently so indifferent; why he does *not* hasten to deliver his people, and to punish the wicked. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," is all the answer that can be given to this inquiry. Yet it should have occurred to the psalmist, and it should be observed now, that the fact that God *seems* to be indifferent to the state of things, does not *prove* that he *is* indifferent. There is an eternity to come, in which there will be ample time to adjust human affairs, and to develop fully the Divine character and counsels. ¶ *Rescue my soul from their destructions.* My life from the destruction which they are aiming to accomplish. ¶ *My darling.* Marg., *my only one.* See Notes on Ps. xxii. 20. The reference here is to *his own soul* or life. It is the language of tenderness addressed to himself. He had but one soul or life, and that was dear to him, as an only child is dear to its parent. ¶ *From the lions.* Enemies, described as lions; having the fierceness and savage fury of lions. In Ps. xxii. 20 it is, "from

18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among [1] much people.

19 Let not them that are mine enemies [2] wrongfully rejoice over me; *neither* let them wink with

[1] *strong.* [2] *falsely.* [q] John xv. 25.

the eye that [q] hate me without a cause.

20 For they speak not peace; but they devise [r] deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.

21 Yea, they opened their

[r] Matt. xii. 24.

the power of the dog." The idea is the same in both places. Compare Notes on Ps. xxii. 20.

18. *I will give thee thanks*, etc. That is, When I am delivered I will publicly express my gratitude and joy. Comp. Ps. xxii. 25; xviii. 49. ¶ *I will praise thee among much people.* Marg., *strong.* So the Hebrew. The idea here is, *strong in respect to numbers;* that is, when a large body of people should be assembled together.

19. *Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me.* Marg., *falsely.* Literally, "My enemies of falsehood;" that is, who are *falsely* my foes; who have no just cause for being opposed to me. Comp. Matt. v. 11. David was conscious that he had done them no wrong, or that he had given no occasion for their conduct towards him, and hence his prayer is simply a request that *justice* might be done. ¶ Neither *let them wink with the eye.* Comp. Notes on Job xv. 12. See also Prov. vi. 13; x. 10. The word rendered *wink* means properly to tear or cut asunder; and then, to cut with the teeth, to bite; and hence the phrase *to bite the lips*, as an expression of malice, or mischief-making: Prov. xvi. 30; and to bite or pinch the eyes, that is, to press the eyelids together in the manner of biting the lips,—also a gesture of malice or mischief. So Gesenius, *Lex.* But perhaps the more probable meaning is that of *winking* literally; or giving a significant wink of the eyes as an expression of triumph over any one. In this sense the term is often used now. ¶ *That hate me without a cause.* To whom I have given no occasion for opposition. In the case under consideration the psalmist regarded himself as entirely innocent in this respect.

20. *For they speak not peace.* They seek a quarrel. They are unwilling to be on good terms with others, or to live in peace with them. The idea is that they were *disposed* or *inclined* to quarrel. Thus we speak now of persons who are *quarrelsome.* ¶ *They devise deceitful matters.* Literally, "they think of words of deceit." That is, they set their hearts on misrepresentation, and they study such misrepresentations as occasions for strife with others. They falsely represent my character; they attribute conduct to me of which I am not guilty; they pervert my words; they state that to be true which never occurred, and thus they attempt to justify their own conduct. Almost all the quarrels in the world, whether pertaining to nations, to neighbourhoods, to families, or to individuals, are based on some *misrepresentation* of facts, designed or undesigned, and could have been avoided if men had been willing to look at facts as they are, or perfectly understood each other. ¶ *Against* them that are *quiet in the land.* That are disposed to be quiet, or that are inclined to live in peace with those around them. The word rendered *quiet* means literally those who are *timid;* then, those who shrink back, and gather together from fear; then, those in general who are disposed to be peaceful and quiet, or who are indisposed to contention and strife. David implicitly asserts himself to be one of that class;—a man who preferred peace to war, and who had no disposition to keep up a strife with his neighbours.

21. *Yea, they opened their mouth*

mouth wide against me, *and* said, Aha, [s] aha! our eye hath seen *it*.

22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD; keep not [t] silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

23 Stir [u] up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

s Ps. xl. 15. *t* Ps. l. 21; Isa. lxv. 6. *u* Ps. lxxx. 2.

24 Judge [v] me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; [w] and let them not rejoice over me.

25 Let them not say in their hearts, [1] Ah, so would we have it; let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

v 1 Pet. ii. 23. *w* 2 Thess. i. 6. [1] *ah, ah, our soul!*

wide against me. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 13. ¶ *And said, Aha, aha!* See Ps. xl. 15; lxx. 3. The language is that which we use when we *detect* another in doing wrong,—in doing what he meant to conceal. ¶ *Our eye hath seen it.* We are not dependent on the reports of others. We have seen it with our own eyes. We have found you out. We cannot be mistaken in regard to it. The reference is to some supposed *detection* of misconduct on the part of David, and the joy and triumph of such a supposed detection.

22. This *thou hast seen, O* LORD. Thou hast seen what they have done, as they profess to have seen what I have done (ver. 21). Thine eye has been upon all their movements, as they say that theirs has been upon mine. Comp. Notes on ver. 17. ¶ *Keep not silence.* That is, Speak; rebuke them; punish them. God *seemed* to look on with unconcern. As we express it, he *said nothing*. He appeared to pay no attention to what was done, but suffered them to do as they pleased without interposing to rebuke or check them. Comp. Notes on Psalm xxviii. 1. ¶ *O Lord, be not far from me.* Comp. Notes on Ps. x. 1.

23. *Stir up thyself.* Arouse thyself as if from sleep. See Ps. xliv. 23. ¶ *And awake to my judgment.* To execute judgment for me, or to render me justice. A similar petition (almost in the same words) occurs in Ps. vii. 6. See Notes on that passage. ¶ Even *unto my cause.* In my behalf; or, in the cause which so nearly pertains to me.

24. *Judge me, O* LORD *my God.* Pronounce judgment, or judge between me and my enemies. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxvi. 1. ¶ *According to thy righteousness.* That is, *rightly*. Let there be a righteous judgment. The character of God, or the righteousness of God, is the highest standard of equity and justice, and the psalmist asks that he would manifest his real character as judge in interposing in behalf of an injured and oppressed man, and doing justice to him. When we are *right* in our own cause we may ask a just God to interpose and determine between us and our enemies according to his own nature. As between ourselves and our fellow-men we may bring our cause with this plea before a righteous God; as between ourselves and God, we can make no appeal to his *justice*, but our only hope is in his *mercy*. ¶ *And let them not rejoice over me.* Let them not carry out their purposes; let them not be successful, so that they can appeal to the result *as if* they were right, and thus obtain a triumph over me. Comp. ver. 19.

25. *Let them not say in their hearts.* Let them not congratulate themselves on the result; let them not feel that they have triumphed; let them not, under thy government, come off victorious in doing wrong. ¶ *Ah, so would we have it.* Marg., as in Heb., *Ah, our soul.* That is, It is just as we thought it was; just as we desired it should be; that is exactly our mind in the case. God has permitted us to triumph, and he has showed that we are right in the matter. He has decided the thing in our favour, and

26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed [z] with shame and dishonour that magnify *themselves* against me.

27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my [1] righteous cause; yea, let them [y] say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

28 And [z] my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

[x] Ps. cxxxii. 18. [1] *righteousness.*
[y] Ps. lxx. 4. [z] Ps. xxxiv. 1.

it is just as it should be. ¶ *Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.* See Notes on Ps. xxi. 9. The meaning is, We have entirely destroyed him,—as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were destroyed by being swallowed up in the earth, Num. xvi. 31–35. Comp. Lam. ii. 16.

26. *Let them be ashamed,* etc. See Notes on ver. 4. ¶ *That magnify* themselves *against me.* Who seek to exalt themselves over me; to make themselves great by humbling and destroying me. They hope to rise on my ruin.

27. *Let them shout for joy.* That is, Let me be delivered; let my friends see that God is on my side, and that they have occasion to rejoice in his merciful interposition in my behalf. ¶ *That favour my righteous cause.* Marg., as in Heb., *my righteousness.* The reference is to those who considered his cause a just one, and who were his friends. ¶ *Yea, let them say continually.* Let this be a constant subject of grateful reflection,—a perpetual source of joy to them,—that God *has* interposed in my behalf, and has shown that my cause was a just one. ¶ *Let the* LORD *be magnified.* Be regarded as great, exalted, glorious. Let the effect be to elevate their conceptions of the character of God by the fact that he has thus interposed in a righteous cause, and has shown that he is the friend of the wronged and the oppressed. ¶ *Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.* Who delights to make his friends prosperous and happy. Let them see that this *is* the character of God, and let them thus be led to rejoice in him evermore.

28. *And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness.* That is, I will praise thee as a righteous God. ¶ And *of thy praise.* Of that which is a ground or reason for praise. I will speak continually of that in God and in his doings which make it proper that he should be praised. ¶ *All the day long.* Continually; constantly. Every new proof of the kindness of God to him would lead to new acts of praise; and his life, as ours should be, would be a continual expression of thanksgiving.

PSALM XXXVI.

The *title* to this psalm is, "To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD." On the meaning of the phrase "To the chief Musician." see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. The words "A Psalm" are supplied by the translators. The original is simply "of," or "by David," as in Ps. xi., xiv., xxv., xxvi., and others, without indicating whether it is a *psalm* or a *prayer.* In many instances the *character* of the psalm is indicated by the title, as in Ps. iii., iv., v., vi., and others, "*A Psalm* of David;" in Ps. vii., "*Shiggaion* of David;" Ps. xvi., "*Michtam* of David;" Ps. xvii., "*A Prayer* of David," etc. etc. The meaning of the title here is simply that this was *composed* by David, without indicating anything in regard to the *contents* or *character* of the psalm. The addition in the title, "The servant of the Lord," occurs also in the title to Ps. xviii. See Notes on that title. This seems to have been added here, as in Ps. xviii., for some reason which rendered it proper to remark that the psalm was composed by one who was a "servant" or a friend of Jehovah, and who was setting forth something that was peculiarly connected with that service, or was suggested by it,—as expressing either the *feelings* of one who served God; or as showing the *result* of serving

PSALM XXXVI.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of the Lord.

THE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes.

God. In Ps. xviii. the latter seems to have been the prominent idea; in the psalm before us the former seems to be the main thought; *and the psalm is properly an expression of the feelings of one who is truly engaged in the service of God.* As such, its instructions are valuable at all times, and in all ages.

The *occasion* on which the psalm was composed is not known. There is nothing in the title to indicate this, or in the psalm itself, and conjecture is vain. Amyraldus supposed that it had reference to the time of Saul, and especially to the time when he seemed to be friendly to David, but when he secretly harboured malice in his heart, and sought to destroy him, and to the fact that David saw his real designs through all the professions of his friendship and confidence. See Rosenmüller's Introd. to the Psalms. It is certainly *possible* that this may have been the occasion on which the psalm was composed; but there are no circumstances in the psalm which make this absolutely certain, and there were many occasions in the life of David when the description in one part of the psalm (vers. 1-4) would have been applicable to the character and designs of his enemies, as the description in the remainder of the psalm would have been applicable to his own.

The psalm consists of three parts:—

I. A description of the character of the wicked, referring doubtless to some persons who were, or who had been, plotting the ruin of the author of the psalm;—a general description of human depravity, drawn from the character of those whom the psalmist had particularly in his eye, vers. 1-4.

II. A description of the mercy of God, and an expression of strong confidence in that mercy;—particularly, a description of the character of a merciful God as a refuge in times when depravity prevails, and in times of darkness; an expression of strong confidence that light will ultimately come forth from him, and that they will find security who put their trust under the shadow of his wings, vers. 5-9.

III. A prayer of the psalmist that he might experience the mercy of God in this case, and an expression of firm conviction that God would interpose in his behalf, vers. 10-12. He is so confident of this—so certain that it would occur—that he speaks of it as if it were already done.

1. *The transgression of the wicked.* There is considerable difficulty in respect to the grammatical construction of the Hebrew in this verse, though the general sense is plain. The main idea undoubtedly is, that the fair explanation of the conduct of the wicked, or the fair inference to be derived from that conduct was, that they had no fear of God before them; that they did in no proper way regard or fear God. The psalmist introduces himself as looking at the *conduct* or the *acts* of the wicked, and he says that their conduct can be explained, in his judgment, or "in his heart," in no other way than on this supposition. The word "transgression" here refers to some open and public act. What the particular act was the psalmist does not state, though probably it had reference to something which had been done to himself. What is here said, however, with particular reference to his enemies, may be regarded as a general truth in regard to the wicked, to wit, that their conduct is such that the fair interpretation of what they do is, that there is no "fear of God before their eyes," or that they have no regard for his will. ¶ *Saith.* This word—נְאֻם, *neum*—is a participle from a verb, נָאַם *naam*, meaning to mutter; to murmur; to speak in a low voice; and is employed especially with reference to the Divine voice in which the oracles of God were revealed to the prophets. Comp. 1 Kings xix. 12. It is found most commonly in connexion with the word *Lord* or *Jehovah*, expressed by the phrase "Saith the Lord," as if the oracle were the voice of Jehovah. Gen. xxii. 16; Num. xiv. 28; Isa. i.

2 For he flattereth himself in
[1] *to find his iniquity to hate.*
his own eyes, [1] until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

24; iii. 15, *et sæpe.* It is correctly rendered here *saith*; or, the *saying* of the transgression of the wicked is, etc. That is, this is what their conduct *says*; or, this is the fair interpretation of their conduct. ¶ *Within my heart.* Heb., *in the midst of my heart.* Evidently this means in my judgment; in my apprehension; or, as we should say, "So it seems or appears to me." My heart, or my judgment, puts this construction on their conduct, and can put no other on it. ¶ That there is *no fear of God.* No reverence for God; no regard for his will. The sinner acts without any restraint derived from the law or the will of God. ¶ *Before his eyes.* He does not see or apprehend God; he acts as if there were no God. This is the *fair* interpretation to be put upon the conduct of the wicked *everywhere* — that they have no regard for God or his law.

2. *For he flattereth himself in his own eyes.* He puts such an exalted estimate on himself; he so overrates himself and his own ability in judging of what is right and proper, that he is allowed to pursue a course which ultimately makes his conduct odious to all men: the result is *so* apparent, and *so* abominable, that no one can doubt what he himself is. The foundation or the basis of all this is an overweening confidence *in himself*—in his own importance; in his own judgment; in his own ability to direct his course regardless of God. The *result* is such a development of character, that it cannot but be regarded as hateful or odious. There is, indeed, considerable obscurity in the original. A literal translation would be, "For he has made smooth to him in his eyes to find his iniquity to hate." The ancient interpretations throw no light on the passage. The word rendered *flattereth*—חָלַק, *hhalak*—means to be smooth; then, to be smooth in the sense of being bland or flattering: Hosea x 2; Ps. v. 9; Prov. xxviii. 23; ii. 16; vii. 5. Here the meaning is, that he commends himself to himself; he overestimates himself; he ascribes to himself qualities which he does not possess,—either (*a*) by supposing that what he does must be right and proper, or (*b*) by overestimating his strength of virtue, and his power to resist temptation. He does this until God suffers him so to act out his own nature, and to show what he is, that his course of life is *seen* by himself and by others to be odious. ¶ *In his own eyes.* As if his eyes were looking upon himself, or his own conduct. *We* act so as to be seen by others; thus *he* is represented as acting as if he *himself* were looking on, and sought to commend himself to himself. ¶ *Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *to find his iniquity to hate.* Professor Alexander renders this, "As to (God's) finding his iniquity (and) hating (it);" that is (as he supposes the meaning to be), that he flatters himself that God will not find out his iniquity and hate it, or punish it. De Wette renders it, "that he does not find and hate his guilt;" that is, he so flatters himself in what he does, that he does not *see* the guilt of what he is doing, and hate it. He is blind to the real nature of what he is doing. But it seems to me that the true construction is that which is given by our translators. The real difficulty rests on the interpretation of the preposition in the word לִמְצֹא, *limtzo* — "until he find." If the interpretation proposed by De Wette were the true one, the preposition should have been מ instead of ל,—(מִמְּצֹא instead of לִמְצֹא). The preposition here used (ל) often has the sense of *even unto, until.* Comp. Ezek. xxxix. 19; Isa. vii. 15; and this idea seems best to comport with the connexion. The idea, according to this, is that he overestimates himself; he prides him-

3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and* to [a] do good.

4 He deviseth [1] mischief upon his [b] bed; he setteth himself in a

a Jer. iv. 22. *b* Prov. iv. 16. [1] Or, *vanity.*

way *that is* not good: he abhorreth [c] not evil,

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens, *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

c Ps. xcvii. 10.

self on his own strength and goodness, he confides in his own wisdom and power, he pursues his course of conduct trusting in himself, until he is suffered to act out what is really in his heart,—and his conduct becomes hateful and abominable,—until he can no longer conceal what he really is. God suffers him to act out what he had endeavoured to cover over by his own flattery. Men who pride themselves on their own cunning and strength,—men who attempt to conceal their plans from the world,—are often thus suffered to develop their character so that the mask is taken off, and the world is allowed to see how vile they are at heart.

3. *The words of his mouth* are *iniquity and deceit.* Are false and wicked. See Notes on Ps. xii. 2. His words do not fairly represent or express what is in his heart. ¶ *He hath left off to be wise.* To act wisely; to do right. ¶ And *to do good.* To act benevolently and kindly. This would seem to imply that there had been a change in his conduct, or that he was not what he once professed to be, and appeared to be. This *language* would be applicable to the change in the conduct of Saul towards David after he became envious and jealous of him (1 Sam. xviii.); and it is *possible,* as Amyraldus supposed, that this may have had particular reference to him. But such instances of a change of feeling and conduct are not very uncommon in the world, and it may doubtless have happened that David experienced this more than once in his life.

4. *He deviseth mischief upon his bed.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *vanity.* That is, when he lies down; when he is wakeful at night; he plots some scheme of iniquity—some vain, wicked enterprise. So in Prov. iv. 16, "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." ¶ *He setteth himself.* That is, he takes his stand or his position; he assumes this attitude. See Ps. ii. 2, "The kings of the earth *set themselves,*" where the same word occurs. The meaning is that what is done by him is the result of a calm and deliberate purpose. It is not the effect of passion or temporary excitement, but it is a deliberate act in which the mind is *made up* to do the thing. The conduct here referred to is thus distinguished from rash and hasty acts, showing that this is the settled character of the man. ¶ *In a way* that is *not good.* In a bad or wicked way; in a way in which no good can be found; in conduct which allows of no redeeming or mitigating circumstances, and for which there can be no apology. ¶ *He abhorreth not evil.* He has no aversion to evil. He is not in any manner deterred from doing anything *because* it is wrong. The fact that it is sinful is not allowed to be a consideration affecting his mind in determining what he shall do. In other words, the moral quality of an action does not influence him at all in making up his mind as to how he shall act. If it is right, it is by accident, and not because he prefers the right; if it is wrong, that fact does not in any way hinder him from carrying his purpose into execution. This is, of course, the very essence of depravity.

5. *Thy mercy,* O LORD, is *in the heavens.* This commences the second part of the psalm,—the description of the character of God in contrast with the character of the wicked man. The meaning here is, evidently, that the mercy of God is very exalted; to the very heavens, as high as the

6 Thy righteousness *is* like the [1] great mountains; thy judgments *are* a great [d] deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

[1] *mountains of God.* [d] Rom. xi. 33.

highest object of which man can conceive. Thus we speak of virtue as *exalted*, or virtue of the *highest kind*. The idea is not that the mercy of God is *manifested* in heaven, for, mercy being favour shown to the guilty, there is no occasion for it in heaven; nor is the idea that mercy, as shown to man, has its *origin* in heaven, which is indeed true in itself; but it is, as above explained, that it is of the most exalted nature; that it is as high as man can conceive. ¶ And *thy faithfulness*. Thy *truthfulness*; thy fidelity to thy promises and to thy friends. ¶ Reacheth *unto the clouds*. The clouds are among the highest objects. They rise above the loftiest trees, and ascend above the mountains, and seem to lie or roll along the sky. The idea here, therefore, as in the first part of the verse, is, that it is elevated or exalted.

6. *Thy righteousness*. Thy justice; that is, the justice of God considered as residing in his own nature; his justice in his laws; his justice in his providential dealings; his justice in his plan of delivering man from sin; his justice to the universe in administering the rewards and penalties of the law. ¶ Is *like the great mountains*. Marg., as in Heb., *the mountains of God*. The name *God* is thus, in the Scriptures, often given to that which is great or exalted, as God is the greatest Being that the mind can form any conception of. So in Ps. lxxx. 10: "The boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars,"—in the Heb., *cedars of God*. Connecting his name with *mountains* or *cedars*, we have the idea of *strength* or *greatness*, as being peculiarly the work of the Almighty. The idea here is, that as the mountains are the most stable of all the objects with which we are acquainted, so it is with the justice of God. It is as fixed as the everlasting hills. ¶ *Thy judgments*. The acts and records which are expressive of thy judgment in regard to what is right and best; that judgment as it is expressed in thy law, and in thy dealings with mankind. The *judgment* of God in any matter may be expressed either by a declaration or by his acts. The latter is the idea now most commonly attached to the word, and it has come to be used almost exclusively to denote *afflictive* dispensations of his Providence, or expressions of his displeasure against sin. The word is not used in that exclusive sense in the Scriptures. It refers to *any* Divine adjudication as to what is right, whether expressed by declaration or by act, and would include his adjudications in favour of that which is right as well as those against that which is wrong. ¶ Are *a great deep*. The word rendered *deep* here means properly wave, billow, surge; then, a mass of waters, a flood, a deep; and the phrase *great deep* would properly refer to the ocean, its *depth* being one of the most remarkable things in regard to it. The *idea* here is, that as we cannot fathom the ocean or penetrate to its bottom, so it is with the judgments of God. They are beyond our comprehension, and after all our efforts to understand them, we are constrained, as in measuring the depths of the ocean, to confess that we cannot reach to the bottom of them. This is true in regard to his law, in regard to the principles of his government as he has declared them, and in regard to his actual dealings with mankind. It could not be otherwise than that in the administration of an infinite God there must be much that man, in his present state, could not comprehend. Comp. Job xi. 7–9; Isa. lv. 8, 9. ¶ O LORD, *thou preservest man and beast*. Literally, thou wilt *save*; that is, thou savest them from destruction. The idea is, that he keeps them alive; or that life, where it is continued, is always continued by his agency. The psalmist evidently sees in the fact here stated an illus-

7 How [1] excellent *is* thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

[1] *precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7.
e Ps. lxv. 4.

8 They [e] shall be [2] abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river [f] of thy pleasures.

[2] *watered*. *f* Rev. xxii. 17.

tration of what he had just said about the *greatness* of God in his providential agency and his general government. He was struck with his greatness, and with the incomprehensible nature of his power and agency, in the fact that he kept alive continually so many myriads of creatures upon the earth—so many hundred millions of human beings—so many thousand millions of wild beasts, reptiles, fishes, birds, and insects—all dependent on him; that he provided for their wants, and that he protected them in the dangers to which they were exposed. And who *can* comprehend the extent of his law, and the wonderfulness of his Providence, in thus watching over and providing for the multitudes of animated beings that swarm in the waters, in the air, and on the earth?

7. *How excellent.* Margin, as in Hebrew, *precious.* The word here used is one that would be applicable to precious stones (1 Kings x. 2, 10, 11); or to the more costly kind of stones employed in building, as marble (2 Chron. iii. 6); and then, anything that is *costly* or *valuable.* The meaning is, that the loving-kindness of God is to be estimated only by the value set on the most rare and costly objects. ¶ Is *thy loving-kindness.* Thy mercy. The same word is used here which occurs in ver. 5, and which is there rendered *mercy.* It is not a *new* attribute of God which is here celebrated or brought into view, but the same characteristic which is referred to in ver. 5. The repetition of the word indicates the state of mind of the writer of the psalm, and shows that he *delights* to dwell on this; he naturally turns to this; his meditations begin and end with this. While he is deeply impressed by the "faithfulness," the "righteousness," and the "judgment" of God, still it is his "mercy" or his "loving-kindness" that is the beginning and the ending of his thoughts. To this the soul turns with ever new delight and wonder when reflecting on the character and the doings of God. Here *our* hope begins; and to this attribute of the Almighty, when we have learned all else that we *can* learn about God, the soul turns with ever new delight. ¶ *Therefore.* In view of that mercy; or *because* God is a merciful God. It is not in his *justice* that we can take refuge, for we are sinners, but the foundation of all our hope is his mercy. A *holy* creature could fly to a holy Creator for refuge and defence; he who has given himself to Him, and who has been pardoned, can appeal to his "faithfulness;" but the refuge of a sinner, as such, is only his *mercy;* and it is only to that mercy that he can flee. ¶ *The children of men.* Literally, "the sons of man;" that is, the human race, considered as descended from their great ancestor, or as one family. The meaning is not that all the children of men actually *do* thus put their trust in the mercy of God—for that is not true; but (*a*) all *may* do it *as* the children of men, or as men; and (*b*) all who *do* "put their trust under the shadow of his wings" confide in his *mercy* alone, as the ground of their hope. ¶ *Under the shadow of thy wings.* As little, helpless birds seek protection under the wings of the mother-bird. See Notes on Matt. xxiii. 37; comp. Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.

8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied.* Margin, *watered.* That is, all who thus put their trust in the *mercy* of God. The Hebrew word—רָוָה, *ravah*—means to drink to the full; to be satisfied, or sated with drink; or to be satisfied or filled with

9 For [g] with thee *is* the fountain of life: in [h] thy light shall we see light.

[g] Jer. ii. 13; John iv. 10, 14. [h] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

water, as the earth or fields after an abundant rain: Isa. xxxiv. 7; Ps. lxv. 10. The state referred to by the word is that of one who was thirsty, but who has drunk to the full; who feels that his desire is satisfied: (*a*) he has found that which is *adapted* to his wants, or which *meets* his wants, as water does the wants of one who is athirst; (*b*) he has found this *in abundance*. There is no lack, and he partakes of it in as large measure as he chooses. So the weary and thirsty traveller, when he finds in the desert a "new and untasted spring," finds that which he needs, and drinks freely; and so the sinner—the dying man—the man who feels that there is nothing in the world that can satisfy him, (1) finds in the provisions of the gospel that which exactly meets the wants of his nature, and (2) he finds it in abundance. ¶ *With the fatness.* The word here used means properly *fatness* or *fat:* Judges ix. 9. Then it means *fat food,* or *sumptuous food,* Job xxxvi. 16; Isa. lv. 2; Jer. xxxi. 14. It is connected here with the word *drink,* or *drink in,* because this kind of food was *sucked* in at the mouth, and the mode of partaking of it resembled the act of drinking. *Gesenius.*—The allusion is the same as that which so often occurs in the Scriptures, where the provisions of salvation are represented as a *feast,* or where the illustration is drawn from the act of eating or drinking. ¶ *Of thy house.* Furnished by thy house, or in the place of public worship. God is represented as the Head or Father of a family, and as providing for the wants of his children. Comp. Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4. ¶ *And thou shalt make them drink.* In allusion to the provisions of salvation considered as adapted to satisfy the wants of the thirsty soul. ¶ *Of the river.* The abundance. Not a running fountain; not a gentle bubbling rivulet; not a stream that would soon dry up; but a "*river,*"—large; full; overflowing; inexhaustible. ¶ *Of thy pleasures.* Furnishing happiness or pleasure such as *thine* is. The pious man has happiness of the same *kind* or *nature* as that of God. It is happiness in holiness or purity; happiness in doing good; happiness *in* the happiness of others. It is in this sense that the friend of God partakes of *his* pleasure or happiness. Comp. 2 Peter i. 4. The following things, therefore, are taught by this verse:—(1) that God is happy; (2) that religion makes man happy; (3) that his happiness is of the same *kind* or *nature* as that of God; (4) that this happiness is *satisfying* in its nature, or that it meets the real wants of the soul; (5) that it is abundant, and leaves no want of the soul unsupplied; and (6) that this happiness is to be found in an eminent degree in the "house of God," or is closely connected with the public worship of God. It is there that God has made provision for the wants of his people; and advancement in religion, and in the comforts of religion, will always be closely connected with the fidelity with which we attend on public worship.

9. *For with thee* is *the fountain of life.* The fountain or source from which all life flows. All living beings derive their origin from thee, as streams flow from fountains; all that is properly *called* life proceeds from thee; everything which makes life *real* life,—which makes it desirable or happy,—has its origin in thee. The psalmist evidently meant here to include more than mere *life* considered as animated existence. He recalls what he had referred to in the previous verses—the various blessings which proceeded from the mercy and loving-kindness of God, and which were attendant on his worship; and he here says that *all* this—*all* that makes man happy—all that can properly be regarded as *life*—proceeds from God. Life literally, in man and in all animated beings; life spi-

10 O [1] continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

[1] *draw out at length.*

ritually; life here, and life hereafter,—all is to be traced to God. ¶ *In thy light shall we see light.* As thou art the Source of light, and all light proceeds from thee, so we shall be enabled to see light, or to see what is true, only as we see it in thee. By looking to thee; by meditating on thy character; by a right understanding of thyself; by being encompassed with the light which encompasses thee, we shall see light on all those great questions which perplex us, and which it is so desirable that we should understand. It is not by looking at ourselves; it is not by any human teaching; it is not by searching for information *away from thee,* that we can hope to have the questions which perplex us solved; it is only by coming to thyself, and looking directly to thee. There is no other source of real light and truth but God; and in the contemplation of himself, and of the light which encompasses him, and in that alone, can we hope to comprehend the great subjects on which we pant so much to be informed. All away from God is dark; all near him is light. If, therefore, we desire light on the subjects which pertain to our salvation, it must be sought by a direct and near approach to him; and the more we can lose ourselves in the splendours of his throne, the more we shall understand of truth. Compare 1 John i. 5; Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

10. *O continue.* Marg., as in Heb., *draw out at length.* The Hebrew word means *to draw;* hence, *to draw out,* in the sense of *continuing* or *prolonging.* Comp. Ps. lxxxv. 5; cix. 12; Jer. xxxi. 3. The desire of the psalmist here is, that God would make the manifestation of his loving-kindness *continuous* or *perpetual* to his people; that it might not be fitful and interrupted, but always enduring, or constant. It is the utterance of a prayer that his favour might *always* be manifested to his friends. ¶ *Thy loving-kindness.* Thy mercy, vers. 5, 7. ¶ *Unto them that know thee.* That are thy friends. The word *know* is often used to denote true religion: John xvii. 3; Phil. iii. 10; Eph. iii. 19; 2 Tim. i. 12. ¶ *And thy righteousness.* Thy favour; thy protection. That is, show to them the righteousness, or the glory of thy character. Deal with them according to those just principles which belong to thy character. Comp. Notes on 1 John i. 9. ¶ *To the upright in heart.* Those who are pure and holy in their intentions or their purposes. Comp. Ps. vii. 10. All true uprightness has its seat in the heart, and the psalmist prays that God would show his continued favour to those whom he sees to be true in heart to himself.

11. *Let not the foot of pride come against me.* The foot of the proud man. The word rendered "come *against* me" more properly means, "come not *upon* me;" and the meaning is, Let me not be *trampled down* as they who are vanquished in battle are *trodden down* by their conquerors. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 40. ¶ *And let not the hand of the wicked remove me.* Let no efforts of the wicked do this. The *hand* is the instrument by which we accomplish anything, and the reference here is to the efforts which the wicked might make to destroy him. The prayer is, that he might be *firm* and *unmoved* amid all the attempts which might be made to take his life.

12. *There are the workers of iniquity fallen.* The meaning of this seems to be, that the psalmist saw his prayer answered already. He speaks as if that which he desired and had prayed

for was already done, and as if he himself saw it. He was so certain that it would be done, he had such an assurance that his prayer would be answered, that he seemed, by faith, to see the events already occurring before his own eyes, and felt that he might speak of what he prayed for as if it were already granted. Such is the nature of faith; and such strong confidence in God, and in his faithfulness to his promises, may all have who pray in faith. It is remarkable, as has been observed already in reference to the Psalms, how often a psalm *begins* in depression and *ends* in triumph; how often the author is desponding and sad as he surveys, at the beginning of the psalm, the troubles which surround him, and how in the progress of the psalm the clouds disperse; the mind becomes calm; and the soul becomes triumphant. ¶ *They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.* They are utterly overthrown. Their discomfiture is complete. They shall never be able to rally again. So faith looks on all enemies of truth and righteousness as hereafter to be utterly overthrown, and it regards this as so certain that it may speak already in the exulting language of victory. So certainly will all the spiritual foes of those who trust in God be vanquished, —so certainly will the righteous triumph,—that, on the wings of faith, they may look beyond all conflicts and struggles, and see the victory won, and break forth into songs of exulting praise. Faith often converts the promises into reality, and in the bright anticipations and the certain hopes of heaven sings and rejoices as if it were already in our possession,—anticipating only by a few short days, weeks, or years, what will certainly be ours.

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is entitled simply "of David," or "by David"—לְדָוִד. In the original title there is no intimation, as in Ps. iii., iv., vii., xvi., xvii., whether it is a *psalm* or some other species of composition, but the idea is merely that it is *a composition* of David, or that David was its *author*.

This is one of the *alphabetical* psalms: see introd. to Ps. xxv. In this psalm the peculiarity of the composition is, that the successive letters of the alphabet occur at the beginning of every other verse, the first, the third, the fifth, etc. The exceptions are at vers. 7, 20, 29, 34. In ver. 29 the letter צ—*tzaddi* —occurs instead of ע, *ain*;—and in vers. 7, 20, and 34, the letter introduces only a single verse. It is not possible now to account for these irregularities in the structure of the psalm. J. J. Bellermann (in dem Versuch über die Metrik der Hebräer, p. 117, seq.) endeavoured from conjecture to restore the regular series of verses by changing a portion of them; but there is no authority for this from the manuscripts, and the probability is, that the author of the psalm did not observe *entire* accuracy in this respect, but that he made use of the successive Hebrew letters only as a *general* guide in controlling the mode of the composition. In this psalm the succession of *letters* does not in any way denote a succession or a variety of *subjects*.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not mentioned in the title, nor is there anything in the psalm itself to fix it to any particular period of the life of David. Like Ps. lxxiii., it seems to have been suggested by a contemplation of the character and designs of the wicked, and especially of the fact that they are permitted to live, and that they enjoy, under the Divine administration, so much prosperity. The psalm is designed to meet and remove the perplexity arising from that fact, not (it would seem) as a *personal* matter in the case of the psalmist, or because the author of the psalm was himself suffering any wrong from the wicked, but as a perplexity often arising from the general fact. This fact has perplexed and embarrassed reflecting men in all ages, and it has been an object of earnest solicitude to find a solution of it, or a method of reconciling it with the administration of a pure and righteous God. The purpose of this psalm seems to have been to furnish in some degree a solution of the difficulty, or to calm down the mind in its contemplation. The psalm begins, therefore, with the general counsel, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the

PSALM XXXVII.

A Psalm of David.

FRET[i] not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious[k] against the workers of iniquity.

i 1 Sam. i. 6; Prov. xxiv. 19.
k Ps. lxxiii. 3.

workers of iniquity," ver. 1. This may be regarded either as counsel addressed to some one,—either a real or an imaginary person,—whose mind was thus agitated, or who was disposed to fret and murmur on account of this,—and, on that supposition, the drift of the psalm is to calm down such a mind; or it may be regarded as the address or counsel of *God* directed to the psalmist himself in *his* state of perplexity and embarrassment on the subject. From some things in the psalm (vers. 25, 35, 36) it seems most probable that the former is the true supposition.

The points in the psalm are the following:—

I. The main subject of the psalm,—the exhortation not to "fret" or be troubled on account of evil-doers and the workers of iniquity; not to allow the mind to be anxious in regard to the fact that there are such persons, or in regard to their plans, or to their prosperity in the world,—for they are soon to be cut down and pass away, vers. 1, 2.

II. The state of mind which should be cherished in such cases,—*calm confidence in God in the faithful performance of duty*, vers. 3–8. We are to trust in the Lord, and do good, ver. 3; to find our happiness in God, ver. 4; to commit our way to him in all our perplexities and troubles, vers. 5, 6; to rest secure in him, waiting patiently for his interposition, ver. 7; and to cease from all wrathful or revengeful feelings in reference to the wicked, ver. 8.

III. The reasons for this state of mind, vers. 9–40.

These reasons, without being kept entirely distinct, are two in number,—

(1.) The future doom of the wicked, vers. 9–15. The general idea here is, that they will be cut off, and soon pass away; that they will not secure ultimate success and prosperity, but that their wicked conduct will recoil on themselves, and overwhelm them in destruction.

(2.) The ultimate prosperity of the righteous, vers. 16–40. This is illustrated from various points of view, and with special reference to the experience of the psalmist. After some general statements in regard to the happy lot of the righteous (vers. 16–24), he refers to his own observation, during a long life, respecting the comparative effects of a wicked and a righteous course. This is shown in two respects:—

(*a*) The protection and care of Providence over the righteous, vers. 25, 26. He says that he had been young, and that he was then an aged man, but that in his long life he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging bread.

(*b*) The providence of God as against the wicked, vers. 35, 36. He says that he had seen the wicked man in great power, and flourishing like a tree, but he soon passed away, and could no more be found upon the earth.

The general argument in the psalm, therefore, is that righteousness, the fear of God, *religion*, has a tendency to promote ultimate happiness, and to secure length of days and real honour upon the earth; that the prosperity of the wicked is temporary, and that however prosperous and happy they may seem to be, they will be ultimately cut off and made miserable.

It remains only to add that this psalm was composed when David was an old man (ver. 25); and apart, therefore, from the fact that it is the work of an inspired writer, it has special value as expressing the result of the observations of a long life on a point which perplexes the good in every age.

1. *Fret not thyself.* The Hebrew word here means properly to burn, to be kindled, to be inflamed, and is often applied to anger, as if under its influence we become *heated:* Gen. xxxi. 36; xxxiv. 7; 1 Sam. xv. 11; 2 Sam. xix. 43. Hence it means to fret oneself, to be angry, or indignant. Comp. Prov. xxiv. 19. We should perhaps express the same idea by the word *worrying* or *chafing.* The state of mind is that where we are worried, or envious, because others are prosperous and successful, and we are not. The idea is, therefore, closely allied with that in the other part of the verse, "neither be thou *envious.*"

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

[1] *in truth* or *stableness.*

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good: *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and [1] verily thou shalt be fed.

¶ *Because of evil-doers.* Wicked men:—(*a*) at the fact that there *are* wicked men, or that God suffers them to live; (*b*) at their numbers; (*c*) at their success and prosperity. ¶ *Neither be thou envious.* Envy is pain, mortification, discontent, at the superior excellence or prosperity of others, accompanied often with some degree of malignant feeling, and with a disposition to detract from their merit. It is the result of a comparison of ourselves with others who are more highly gifted or favoured, or who are more successful than we are ourselves. The feeling referred to here is that which springs up in the mind when we see persons of corrupt or wicked character prospered, while we, endeavouring to do right, are left to poverty, to disappointment, and to tears.

2. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass.* As the grass in the field is cut down by the mower; that is, however prosperous they may seem to be now, they are like the grass in the meadow which is so green and luxuriant, but which is soon to fall under the scythe of the mower. Their prosperity is only temporary, for they will soon pass away. The idea in the word rendered *soon*—מְהֵרָה, *mehairah* —is that of *haste* or *speed:* Ps. cxlvii. 15; Num. xvi. 46; Deut. xi. 17. The thought is not that it will be done immediately, but that *when* it occurs it will be a quick and rapid operation, —as the grass falls rapidly before the mower. ¶ *And wither as the green herb.* When it is cut down. That is, not as the dry and stinted shrub that grows in the desert of sand, but like the herb that grows in a garden, or in a marsh, or by the river, that is full of juices, and that needs abundant water to sustain it—like the flag or rush (comp. Job viii. 11)—and that withers almost instantly when it is cut down. The rapidity with which things *wilt* is in proportion to the rapidity of their growth, so the prosperity of a sinner is suddenly blasted, and he passes away. Comp. Ps. xc. 5, 6.

3. *Trust in the* LORD. Confide in him; rest on him. Instead of allowing the mind to be disturbed and sad, because there are wicked men upon the earth; because they are prosperous and apparently happy; because they may injure you in your person or reputation (ver. 6), calmly confide in God. Leave all this in his hands. Feel that he rules, and that what he permits is wisely permitted; and that whatever may occur, it will all be overruled for his own glory and the good of the universe. ¶ *And do good.* Be engaged always in some work of benevolence. (*a*) If there are wicked men in the world, if wickedness abounds around us, there is the more reason for our endeavouring to do good. If others are doing evil, we should do good; if they are wicked, we cannot do a better work than to do good to them, for the best way of meeting the wickedness of the world is to do it good. (*b*) The best way to keep the mind from murmuring, chafing, and fretting, is to be always engaged in doing good; to have the mind always occupied in something valuable and useful. Each one should have so much of his own to do that he will have no time to murmur and complain, to allow the mind to prey on itself, or to *corrode* for want of employment. ¶ So *shalt thou dwell in the land.* This would be more correctly translated as a command: "Dwell in the land." That is, abide safely or securely in the land,—referring, perhaps, to "the land" as the land of promise—the country given to the people of God. The idea is, that they should abide there calmly and securely; that they should not worry themselves because there were

4 Delight [l] thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 [l] Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring *it* to pass:

6 And [m] he shall bring forth

[l] Isa. lviii. 14.

[l] *roll thy way upon*, Ps. xxii. 8.
[m] Mic. vii. 8, 9.

wicked men upon the earth, and because they were successful, but that they should be thankful for their inheritance, and partake gratefully of the bounties which they receive from the hand of God. Comp. Notes on Matt. v. 5. ¶ *And verily thou shalt be fed.* Marg., *in truth* or *stableness.* The *literal* meaning would be, "Feed on truth." The word rendered *fed* is here in the imperative mood. It properly means to feed, as a flock; and then, to feed upon anything in the sense of delighting in, or taking pleasure in anything, as if we found our support or sustenance in it; and here it means, doubtless, *Feed on truth;* that is, seek after truth; find delight in it; let it be the food of your souls. The word here rendered *verily* means, as in the margin, *truth:* and the meaning is, that they should seek after truth, and find their support and comfort in that. There are, then, in this verse, four things prescribed as duty, in order to keep the mind calm in view of the fact that wickedness abounds in the world: (1) to confide in God; (2) to be actively employed in doing good; (3) to abide calmly and gratefully in the land which God has given *us;* (4) to seek after *truth,* or a true view of the character and government of God as the great Ruler. If men would do these things, there would be little murmuring and fretting in the world.

4. *Delight thyself also in the* LORD. The word rendered *delight* means properly to live delicately and effeminately; then, to be tender or delicate; then, to live a life of ease or pleasure; then, to find delight or pleasure in anything. The meaning here is, that we should seek our happiness in God —in his being, his perfections, his friendship, his love. ¶ *And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* Literally, the *askings,* or the *requests* of thy heart. What you really *desire* will be granted to you. That is, (*a*) the fact that you seek your happiness in him will *regulate* your desires, so that you will be *disposed* to ask only those things which it will be proper for him to grant; and (*b*) the fact that you *do* find your happiness in him will be a reason why he will grant your desires. The fact that a child loves his father, and finds his happiness in doing his will, will do much to regulate his own *wishes* or *desires,* and will at the same time be a *reason* why the father will be disposed to comply with his requests.

5. *Commit thy way unto the* LORD. Marg., as in Heb., *Roll thy way upon the Lord.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 8, where the marg., as the Heb., is, *He rolled himself on the Lord.* See also 1 Pet. v. 7. The idea is that of rolling a heavy burden from ourselves on another, or laying it upon him, so that he may bear it. The burden which we have not got strength to bear we may lay on God. The term *way* means properly the act of treading or going; then, a way or path; then, a course of life, or the manner in which one lives; and the reference here is to the whole course of life, or all that can affect life; all our plans or conduct; all the issues or results of those plans. It is equivalent here to *lot* or *destiny.* Everything, in regard to the manner in which we live, and all its results, are to be committed to the Lord. ¶ *Trust also in him.* See ver. 3. ¶ *And he shall bring* it *to pass.* Heb., *He shall do it.* That is, He will bring it to a proper issue; He will secure a happy result. He will take care of your interests, and will not permit you to suffer, or to be ultimately wronged. The thing particularly referred to here, as appears from the next verse, is reputation or character.

thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 [1] Rest in the LORD, and wait [n] patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

[1] *be silent to.*

n Prov. xx. 22; Lam. iii. 25, 26.

6. *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.* That is, if you are slandered; if your character is assailed, and seems for the time to be under a cloud; if reproach comes upon you from the devices of wicked men in such a way that you cannot meet it,—then, if you will commit the case to God, he will protect your character, and will cause the clouds to disperse, and all to be as clear in reference to your character and the motives of your conduct as the sun without a cloud. There are numerous cases in which a man cannot meet the assaults made on his reputation, in which he cannot trace to its source a slanderous accusation, in which he cannot immediately explain the circumstances which may have served to give the slanderous report an appearance of probability, but in which he may be perfectly conscious of innocence; and, in such cases, the only resource is to commit the whole matter to God. And there is nothing that may be more safely left with him; nothing that God will more certainly protect than the injured reputation of a good man. Under his administration things will ultimately work themselves right, and a man will have all the reputation which he deserves to have. But he who spends his life in the mere work of defending himself, will soon have a reputation that is not much worth defending. The true way for a man is to do his duty—to do right always—and then commit the whole to God. ¶ *And thy judgment.* Thy just sentence. That is, God will cause justice to be done to your character. ¶ *As the noon-day.* The original word here is in the *dual* form, and means properly *double-light;* that is, the strongest, brightest light. It means *noon,* because the light is then most clear and bright. The idea is, that he will make your character perfectly clear and bright. No cloud will remain on it.

7. *Rest in the* LORD. Marg., *Be silent to the Lord.* The Hebrew word means to be dumb, silent, still: Job xxix. 21; Lev. x. 3; Lam. iii. 28. Hence to be silent *to* any one; that is, to listen to him in silence; and the idea in the phrase here, "*be silent to Jehovah,*" is that of waiting in silent patience or confidence for his interposition; or, in other words, of leaving the whole matter with him without being anxious as to the result. ¶ *And wait patiently for him.* For his bringing the matter to a proper issue. He may seem to delay long; it may appear strange that he does not interpose; you may wonder that he should suffer an innocent man to be thus accused and calumniated; but you are not to be anxious and troubled. God does not always interpose in behalf of the innocent at once; and there *may be* valuable ends to accomplish in reference to yourself,—in the discipline of your own spirit; in bringing out in your case the graces of gentleness, patience, and forgiveness; and in leading you to examine yourself and to understand your own character, —which may make it proper that he should *not* interpose immediately. It may be added that, however important *time* seems to us, it is of no consequence to God; *nullum tempus occurrit* (as the lawyers say), to him; and more important results *may* be secured by delay than would be gained by an immediate interposition in correcting the evil and redressing the wrong. All that the promise implies is that justice *will be done,* but whether sooner or later must be left to him; and that our character will be *finally* safe in his hands. ¶ *Fret not thyself.* See Notes on ver. 1. ¶ *Because of*

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

9 For evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

10 For yet a little while, and

him who prospereth in his way. Because a wicked man has a prosperous life, or is not at once dealt with as he deserves. ¶ *Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.* Because the man is allowed to accomplish his purposes of wickedness, or is not arrested at once in his schemes of guilt.

8. *Cease from anger.* That is, in reference to the fact that there *are* wicked men, and that they are permitted to carry out their plans. Do not allow your mind to be excited with envious, fretful, wrathful, or murmuring feelings against God because he bears patiently with them, and because they are allowed a temporary prosperity and triumph. Be calm, whatever may be the wickedness of the world. The supreme direction belongs to God, and he will dispose of it in the best way. ¶ *And forsake wrath.* That is, as above, in regard to the existence of evil, and to the conduct of wicked men. ¶ *Fret not thyself in any wise.* See ver. 1. Let the mind be entirely calm and composed. ¶ *To do evil.* So as to lead you to do evil. Do not allow your mind to become so excited that you will indulge in harsh or malignant remarks; or so as to lead you to do wrong to any man, however wicked he may be. See always that *you* are right, whatever others may be, and do not allow their conduct to be the means of leading you into sin in any form. Look to your own character and conduct first.

9. *For evil-doers shall be cut off.* See ver. 2. This will be the termination of their course. They shall not ultimately prosper. God will order all things in equity, and though such men now seem to be prosperous, and to be the objects of the Divine favour, yet all this is temporary. The day of retribution will certainly come, and they will be dealt with as they deserve. The reference here probably is to judgment in this life, or to the fact that God will, as a general law, show his disapprobation of the course of the wicked by judgments inflicted on them in this world. See Ps. lv. 23, "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Prov. x. 27, "The years of the wicked shall be shortened." Comp. Job xv. 32. The idea here is that wicked men will be cut down before they reach the ordinary term of human life, or before they would be cut off if they were *not* wicked. Comp. vers. 35, 36. This is not indeed universally true, but there are instances enough of this kind to establish it as a *general* rule. Intemperance, voluptuousness, the indulgence of violent passions, and the crimes proceeding therefrom, shorten the lives of multitudes who, but for these, might have lived long on the earth. As it is a *general* rule that virtue, piety, the fear of God, temperance, honesty, and the calmness of spirit which results from these, tend to lengthen out life, so it is certain that the opposites of these tend to abridge it. Neither virtue nor piety indeed make it absolutely certain that a man will live to be old; but vice and crime make it morally certain that he will not. At all events, it is true that the wicked *are* to live but a little while upon the earth; that they soon *will*, like other men, be cut down and removed; and therefore we should not fret and murmur in regard to those who are so soon to pass away. Comp. Ps. lxxiii. ¶ *But those that wait upon the* LORD. The pious; they who fear God and serve him. ¶ *They shall inherit the earth.* Comp. Notes on ver. 3. See also vers. 11, 22, 25.

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked* shall *not* be. The time will soon come when they shall pass away. The language "shall not be" cannot mean that they will cease to *exist* alto-

the wicked *shall* not *be;* yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be.*

11 But [o] the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

o Matt. v. 5.

12 The wicked [1] plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13 The LORD shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming.

[1] Or, *practiseth.*

gether, for the connexion does not demand this interpretation. All that is intended is that they would be no longer on the earth; they would no longer live to give occasion for anxious thoughts and troubled feelings in the hearts of good men. ¶ *Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place.* The place where he lived; the house in which he dwelt; the office which he filled; the grounds which he cultivated. ¶ *And it* shall *not* be. Or rather, perhaps, as in the former member of the verse, *he is not.* That is, you will not see *him* there. His seat at the table is vacant; he is seen no more riding over his grounds; he is no more in the social circle where he found his pleasure, or in the place of business or of revelry:—you are impressed with the feeling that *he is gone.* You look where he was, but he is not there; you visit every place where you have been accustomed to see him, *but he is gone.* Alas! *where* has he gone? Comp. Job xiv. 10.

11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth.* See Notes on ver. 3. On the meaning of the word here rendered *meek,* see Notes on Ps. ix. 12, where it is rendered *humble.* The word properly denotes those who are afflicted, distressed, needy; then, those who are of humble rank in life; then, the mild, the gentle, the meek. The term here is a general one to denote those who are the friends of God, considered as meek, mild, gentle, humble, in contradistinction from the wicked who are proud and haughty; perhaps also, in this connexion, in contrast with the wicked as prosperous in life. It was probably this passage that the Saviour quoted in Matt. v. 5. ¶ *And shall delight themselves.* (*a*) Shall *prefer* what is here referred to as the source of their happiness, or as in accordance with the desires of their hearts; (*b*) shall *find* actual delight or happiness in this. Though not rich and prospered in this world as the wicked often are, yet they will have their own sources of enjoyment, and will find happiness in that which they prefer. ¶ *In the abundance of peace.* In abundant peace. In the tranquillity and quietness in which they spend their lives, in contrast with the jealousies, the contentions, and the strifes which exist among the wicked even when prosperous. They will have peace with God (Ps. xxix. 11; lxxxv. 8; cxix. 165; Rom. v. 1); they will have peace in their own consciences; they will have peace in the calmness of a quiet and contented spirit; they will have peace with those around them, as they have no passions to gratify, and no object to secure, which will excite the envy, or stir up the wrath, of others.

12. *The wicked plotteth against the just.* Marg., *practiseth.* The Hebrew word means to plot; to lie in wait; to plan; to purpose; to devise. See Ps. xxxi. 13. The meaning is, that wicked men lay their plans against the righteous, but that they will not be able to carry them out, or accomplish them, for they will be cut off, and the Lord will protect his friends. ¶ *And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.* An expression of rage or anger. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 16.

13. *The* LORD *shall laugh at him.* See Notes on Ps. ii. 4. That is, he will regard all his attempts as vain—as not worthy of serious thought or care. The language is that which we use when there is no fear or apprehension felt. It is not that God is unfeeling, or that he is disposed to

14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay [1] such as be of upright conversation.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken,

16 A [p] little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked.

[1] *the upright of way.* [p] Prov. xv. 16.

deride man, but that he regards all such efforts as vain, and as not demanding notice on the ground of anything to be apprehended from them. ¶ *For he seeth that his day is coming.* The day of his destruction or overthrow. He sees that the wicked man cannot be ultimately successful, but that destruction is coming upon him. There is nothing ultimately to be apprehended from his designs, for his overthrow is certain.

14. *The wicked have drawn out the sword.* That is, they have prepared themselves with a full purpose to destroy the righteous. ¶ *And have bent their bow.* Literally, "have *trodden* the bow," in allusion to the method by which the bow was bent: to wit, by placing the foot on it, and drawing the string back. ¶ *To cast down the poor and needy.* To cause them to fall. ¶ And *to slay such as be of upright conversation.* Marg., as in Heb., *the upright of way.* That is, those who are upright in their manner of life, or in their conduct.

15. *Their sword shall enter into their own heart.* Their purposes will recoil on themselves; or they will themselves suffer what they had devised for others. See the same sentiment expressed in Ps. vii. 15, 16; ix. 15; comp. Esther vii. 10. ¶ *And their bows shall be broken.* They will be defeated in their plans. God will cut them off, and not suffer them to execute their designs.

16. *A little that a righteous man hath.* Literally, *Good is a little to the righteous, more than,* etc. Our translation, however, has expressed the sense with sufficient accuracy. There are two things implied here: (*a*) that it happens not unfrequently that the righteous *have* little of the wealth of this world; and (*b*) that this little is to them of more real value, accompanied, as it is, with higher blessings, than the more abundant wealth which the wicked often possess. It is better to have but little of this world's goods *with* righteousness, than it is to have the riches of many wicked men—or the wealth which is often found in the possession of wicked men—with their ungodliness. It is not always true, indeed, that the righteous are poor; but *if* they are poor, their lot is more to be desired than that of the wicked man, though he is rich. Comp. Luke xvi. 19—31. ¶ Is *better than the riches of many wicked.* Of many wicked men. The small property of *one* truly good man, with his character and hopes, is of more value than would be the aggregate wealth of *many* rich wicked men with their character and prospects. The word rendered riches here—הֲמוֹן, *hamon*—means properly noise, sound, as of rain or of a multitude of men; then, a multitude, a crowd of people; and then, a *multitude* of possessions; that is, riches or wealth. The allusion here is not, as Professor Alexander supposes, to the tumult or bustle which often attends the acquisition of property, or to the disorder and disquiet which attends its possession, but simply to the *amount* considered as large, or as accumulated or brought together. It is true that its acquisition is often attended with bustle and noise; it is true that its possessor has not often the peace and calmness of mind which the man has who has a mere competence; but the simple thought here is that, in reference to the amount, or the actual possession, it is better, on the whole, to have what the poor, pious man has, than to have what many wicked men have, if it were all

17 For the arms [q] of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance [r] shall be for ever.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD

[q] Ezek. xxx. 21, etc. [r] 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

gathered together. It does more to make a man happy on earth; it furnishes a better prospect for the life to come.

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken.* See Notes on Ps. x. 15. The *arm* is the instrument by which we accomplish a purpose; and the meaning here is, that that will be broken on which the wicked rely, or, in other words, that their plans will fail, and that they will be disappointed, —as a man is rendered helpless whose arms are broken. Compare Notes on Job xxxviii. 15. ¶ *But the* LORD *upholdeth the righteous.* The Lord will sustain and strengthen him. While the plans of the wicked will be defeated, while they themselves will be overthrown, and fail to accomplish their purposes of wickedness, the Lord will uphold the righteous, and enable them fully to carry out *their* plans. Their great scheme or purpose of life, the promotion of the glory of God, and the salvation of their own souls, will be fully accomplished,—for in that purpose God will be their helper and friend.

18. *The* LORD *knoweth the days of the upright.* See Notes on Ps. i. 6. He knows how long they will live, and all that will happen to them. He sees their whole course of life; he sees the end. It is implied here that his eyes are on *all* the allotted days of their life; on all that has been ordained for them in the whole course of their life; and that nothing can *shorten* the days appointed to them. The wicked expect to live, hope to live, make their arrangements to live; but their eyes cannot rest on the future, and they cannot see the end,—cannot tell precisely when they will be cut off. Some unexpected calamity—something which they cannot foresee—may come upon them, and cut short their days long before the expected time; but this cannot happen in respect to Him whose eyes are on the righteous. Nothing can prevent their reaching the time which *he* has fixed as the termination of their lives. ¶ *And their inheritance shall be for ever.* Shall be permanent, enduring. Perhaps all that was implied in this language, as it was used by the psalmist, was that they would *continue,* or would not be cut off as the wicked are; that is, that righteousness would contribute to length of days upon the earth (comp. ver. 9); yet the *language* suggests a higher idea, and is applicable to the righteous in respect to the promise that they will be put in *everlasting* possession of that which they "inherit" from God; that is, that they will be literally blessed for ever. They will have a sure inheritance on earth, and it will endure to all eternity in another world.

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.* In times of calamity and trouble. The word *ashamed* here refers to disappointment; as when one goes to a fountain or stream for water and finds it dried up. See Notes on Job vi. 20, and Ps. xxv. 2, 3. The idea here is, that when times of trouble and calamity come, in seasons of famine or want, they will find their expectations, arising from confidence in God, fully met. Their wants will be supplied, and they will find him to be their friend. ¶ *And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* Their wants shall be supplied. God will provide for them. See ver. 25. This is in accordance with the general promises which are made in the Scriptures, that God will provide for the wants of those that trust in him. See Notes on ver. 3.

20. *But the wicked shall perish.* The general sentiment here is the same as in Ps. i., that the righteous

shall be as the [1] fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

[1] *preciousness.*

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.

shall be prospered and saved, and that the wicked shall perish. See Notes on Ps. i. 4, 5. The word *perish* here would be applicable to any form of destruction,—death here, or death hereafter,—for it is equivalent to the idea that they shall be *destroyed.* Whether the psalmist means here to refer to the fact that they will be cut off from the earth, or will be punished hereafter in the world of woe, cannot be determined from the word itself. It is most probable, as appears from other parts of the psalm, that he refers particularly to the fact that they will be cut down in their sins; that their lives will be shortened by their crimes; that they will by their conduct expose themselves to the displeasure of God, and thus be cut off. The *word* used, however, would also express the idea of destruction in the future world in any form, and may have a significance beyond anything that can befall men in this life. Comp. 2 Thess. i. 8; Matt. xxv. 46. ¶ *And the enemies of the* LORD. All the enemies of God; all who can properly be regarded as his foes. ¶ Shall be *as the fat of lambs.* Marg., *the preciousness of lambs.* Gesenius renders this, *like the beauty of the pastures.* Professor Alexander, *like the precious* (part) *of lambs;* that is, the sacrificial parts, or the parts that were consumed in sacrifice. De Wette, *as the splendour of the pasture.* The Vulgate and the LXX. render it, "the enemies of the Lord, as soon as they are honoured and exalted, shall fail as if they were smoke." Rosenmüller renders it as it is in our common version. It is not easy to determine the meaning. The word rendered *fat*—יְקַר, *yakar*—means properly that which is precious, costly, weighty, as precious gems; then, anything dear, beloved, or valuable; then, that which is honoured, splendid, beautiful, rare. It is in no other instance rendered *fat;* and it cannot be so rendered here, except as *fat* was considered valuable or precious. But this is a forced idea. The word כַּר, *kar*, properly and commonly means a *lamb;* but it also may mean the *pasture* or *meadow* where lambs feed. Psa. lxv. 13: "The *pastures*—כָּרִים, *karim*—are clothed with flocks." Isa. xxx. 23, "In that day shall thy cattle feed in large *pastures*"—where the same word occurs. It seems to me, therefore, that the interpretation of Gesenius, De Wette, and others, is the correct interpretation, and that the idea is, that the wicked in their pride, beauty, and wealth, shall be like the meadow covered with grass and flowers, soon to be cut down by the scythe of the mower, or by the frosts of winter. This image often occurs: Matt. vi. 30; Ps. xc. 5, 6; Isa. xl. 6–8; James i. 10; 1 Pet. i. 24. ¶ *They shall consume.* The word here used means to be completed or finished; to be consumed or spent, as by fire, or in any other manner; to pine away by weeping, Lam. ii. 11; to vanish as a cloud or smoke, Job vii. 9. ¶ *Into smoke.* The meaning here is not that they will vanish as the fat of lambs does in sacrifice, but simply that they will pass away as smoke entirely disappears. All that there was of them—their wealth, their splendour, their power—shall utterly vanish away. This is spoken in contrast with what would be the condition of the righteous.

21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.* This is probably intended here, not so much to describe the *character* as the *condition* of the wicked. The idea is, that he will be in such a condition of want that he will be under a necessity of borrowing, but will not have the means of repaying what he has bor-

22 For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 The steps [s] of a *good* man are [1] ordered by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way.

[s] Prov. xvi. 9. [1] Or, *established.*

rowed, while the righteous will not only have enough for himself, but will have the means of showing mercy to others, and of *giving* to them what they need. The ability to lend to others is referred to as a part of the promise of God to his people, and as marking their condition as a prosperous one, in Deut. xv. 6: "And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shalt not borrow." Comp. ch. xxviii. 12, 44. It is true, however, as a characteristic of a wicked man, that he will often be *disposed* to borrow and not pay again; that he will be *reckless* about borrowing and careless about paying; and that it is a characteristic of a good or upright man that he will not borrow when he can avoid it, and that he will be punctual and conscientious in paying what he has borrowed. ¶ *But the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.* That is, in this connexion, he is not under the necessity of borrowing of others for the supply of his wants. He has not only enough for himself, but he has the means of aiding others, and has the disposition to do it. It is his *character* to show favours, and he has the means of gratifying this desire. ¶ *And giveth.* Imparts to others. He has enough for himself, and has also that which he can give to others. Of course all this is designed to be *general.* It does not mean that this will *universally* be the case, but that the tendency of a life of piety is to make a man prosperous in his worldly affairs; to give him what he needs for himself, and to furnish him with the means, as he has the disposition, to do good to others. Other things being equal, the honest, temperate, pure, pious man will be the most prosperous in the world: for honesty, temperance, purity, and piety produce the industry, economy, and prudence on which prosperity depends.

22. *For* such as be *blessed of him.* They who are his true friends. ¶ *Shall inherit the earth.* See ver. 9. ¶ *And* they that be *cursed of him.* His enemies. ¶ *Shall be cut off:* ver. 9. This verse suggests a thought of great importance, in advance of that which had been suggested before. It is that, after all, the difference in the ultimate condition of the two depends on the question whether they have, or have not, *the favour of the Lord.* It is not on the mere fact of their own skill, but it is on the fact that the one has secured the Divine favour, and that the other has not. It is not by mere human virtue, irrespective of God, that the result is determined; but it is that one is the friend of God, and the other not. This consideration will be found in the end to enter *essentially* into all the distinctions in the final condition of mankind.

23. *The steps of a* good *man are ordered by the* LORD. Marg., *established.* The word rendered *ordered* means to stand erect; to set up; to found; to adjust, fit, direct. The idea here is, that all which pertains to the journey of a good man through life is directed, ordered, fitted, or arranged by the Lord. That is, his course of life is under the Divine guidance and control. The word *good* has been supplied here by our translators, and there is nothing corresponding to it in the original. It is simply there, "the steps of man are ordered," etc. Yet there can be no doubt that a good or pious man is particularly referred to, for the connexion demands this interpretation. The word *steps* here means his course of life; the way in which he goes. ¶ *And he delighteth in his way.* In his course of life; and, therefore, he blesses him. The general idea is that he is the object of the Divine favour, and is under the care of God.

24 Though [t] he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

[t] Mic. vii. 8.

25 I have been young, and *now* am old; yet [u] have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

[u] Isa. xxxiii. 16; Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

24. *Though he fall.* That is, though he is sometimes disappointed; though he is not always successful; though he may be unfortunate,—yet this will not be final ruin. The word here does not refer to his falling into *sin*, but into misfortune, disappointment, reverses, calamities. The image is that of a man who is walking along on a journey, but who stumbles, or falls to the earth—a representation of one who is not always successful, but who finds disappointment spring up in his path. ¶ *He shall not be utterly cast down.* The word here used—טוּל, *tul*—means *to throw down at full length, to prostrate;* then, *to cast out, to throw away.* Comp. Isa. xxii. 17; Jer. xvi. 13; xxii. 26; Jonah i. 5, 15. Here it means that he would not be *utterly* and *finally* prostrated; he would not fall so that he could not rise again. The calamity would be temporary, and there would be ultimate prosperity. ¶ *For the Lord upholdeth* him with *his hand.* It is by no power of his own that he is recovered, but it is because, even when he falls, he is held up by an invisible hand. God will not suffer him to sink to utter ruin.

25. *I have been young.* The idea in this whole passage is, "I myself have passed through a long life. I have had an opportunity of observation, wide and extended. When I was a young man I looked upon the world around me with the views and feelings which belong to that period of existence; when in middle life, I contemplated the state of things with the more calm and sober reflections pertaining to that period, and to the opportunities of wider observation; and now, in old age, I contemplate the condition of the world with all the advantages which a still wider observation and a longer experience give me, and with the impartial judgment which one has who is about to leave the world. And the result of all is a conviction that religion is an advantage to man; that God protects his people; that he provides for them; that they are more uniformly and constantly blessed, even in their worldly affairs, than other men, and that they do not often come to poverty and want." There is a sad kind of feeling which a man has when he is constrained to say, "I *have been* young;" for it suggests the memory of joys, and hopes, and friends, that are now gone for ever. But a man may have some claim to respect for his opinions when he is constrained to say it; for he can bring to the coming generation such results of his own experience and observation as may be of great value to those who *are* "young." ¶ *And* now *am old.* This demonstrates that this psalm was one of the later productions of its author; and the psalm has an additional value from this circumstance, as stating the results of a long observation of the course of affairs on the earth. Yet there is much that is solemn when a man is constrained to say, "I *am* old." Life is nearly ended. The joys, the hopes, the vigour of youth, are all gone. The mature strength of manhood is now no more. The confines of life are nearly reached. The next remove is to another world, and that now *must* be near; and it is a solemn thing to stand on the shores of eternity; to look out on that boundless ocean, to feel that earth, and all that is dear on earth, is soon to be left *for ever.* ¶ *Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.* Forsaken by God; so forsaken that he has not a friend; so forsaken that he has nothing with which to supply his wants. ¶ *Nor his seed begging bread.* Nor his children beggars. This was a remarkable testimony; and though it cannot be

26 *He is* [1] ever merciful, and lendeth: and his seed *is* blessed.

[1] *all the day.*

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

affirmed that the psalmist meant to say literally that he had *never*, in any instance, met with such a case—for the language may have been intended as a general statement,—yet it *may* have been true to the letter. In the course of a long life it may have occurred that he had *never* met with such a case,—and if so, it was a remarkable proof of the correctness of the general remarks which he was making about the advantage of piety. It is not now universally true that the "righteous" are not "forsaken," in the sense that they do not want, or in the sense that their children are not constrained to beg their bread, but the following things, are true: (*a*) that religion tends to make men industrious, economical, and prudent, and hence tends to promote prosperity, and to secure temporal comforts; (*b*) that religion *of itself* impoverishes no one, or makes no one the poorer; (*c*) that religion saves from many of the expenses in life which are produced by vicious indulgence; and (*d*) that, as a general rule, it saves men and their children from the necessity of public begging, and from the almshouse. Who are the inmates of the poor-houses in the land? Who are the beggars in our great cities? Here and there, it may be, is one who is the child of pious parents, reduced by sickness or misfortune, or a want of practical good sense,—for religion does not alter the constitution of the mind, and does not impart the *skill* or *talent* on which so much of the success in life depends; but the great mass of persons in our almshouses, and of beggars in the streets, are themselves intemperate, or are the wives and children of the intemperate. They consist of those whom religion, as it would have made them virtuous and industrious, would have saved from rags and beggary. It may not now be literally true that any one who has been young, and who is become old, could say that he had not once seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread; but the writer of these lines, who has this day—the day on which he pens them (Dec. 1, 1859)—reached the sixty-first year of his life, and who is constrained to say "I *have been* young," though he may feel a reluctance to add, "but now *am* old," can say, as the result of his own observation in the world, that, as a great law, the children of the pious are *not* vagrants and beggars. As a great law, they are sober, industrious, and prosperous. The vagrants and the beggars of the world are from other classes; and whatever may be the bearing of religion on the destinies of men in the future world, in this world the effect is to make them virtuous, industrious, prudent, and successful in their worldly affairs, so that their children are not left to beggary and want, but to respectability and to competence.

26. He is *ever merciful.* Marg., as in Heb., *all the day.* That is, it is his character; he is constantly in the habit of showing kindness. He does not do it at intervals, or only occasionally, but it is this that marks the character of the man. He is known by this. The word *merciful* here means kind, compassionate, benignant,—and particularly in this respect, that he is willing to *lend* to others when he has the means. ¶ *And lendeth.* The wicked man *borrows*, but does not pay again (ver. 21); the righteous man *lends* to his neighbour. ¶ *And his seed* is *blessed.* His children; his posterity, as the result of this conduct on his part. The effect of what he does passes over from him to them, conveying rich blessings to them.

27. *Depart from evil, and do good.* This is the sum of all that is said in the psalm; the great lesson inculcated and enforced by all these references to the effects of good and evil conduct. All these results—all that men

28 For [v] the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved [w] for ever: but [x] the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

[v] Isa. xxx. 18. [w] 1 Pet. i. 5.

30 The [y] mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

31 The law of his God *is* in his [z] heart: none of his [1] steps shall slide.

32 The wicked watcheth the

[x] Isa. xiv. 20. [y] Matt. xii. 35.
[z] Deut. vi. 6; Isa. li. 7. [1] Or, *goings*.

experience themselves, and all the effects of their conduct on their posterity, enforce the great practical lesson that we should do good and avoid evil. These *results* of conduct are among the means which God employs to induce men to do right, and to abstain from what is wrong. ¶ *And dwell for evermore.* That is, dwell in the land: meaning (in accordance with the general drift of the psalm) that righteousness will be connected with length of days and with prosperity; that its effects will be permanent on a family, descending from one generation to another. See Notes on ver. 3.

28. *For the* LORD *loveth judgment.* That is, God loves that which is right; he loves to do right. The idea is, that such a recompense as is here adverted to,—that on the one hand, in rewarding with prosperity a pure and upright life—and that, on the other, in cutting off the wicked—is right and proper in itself; and that as God *loves* to do right, these consequences respectively may be expected to follow in regard to the righteous and the wicked. Comp. Ps. xi. 7. ¶ *And forsaketh not his saints.* He manifests his sense of that which is right, by not forsaking his saints. ¶ *They are preserved for ever.* They are ever under his paternal eye, and he will keep them. It *will* be literally true that they will be preserved *for ever*, that they will *never* be suffered to perish. ¶ *But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* See Notes on Ps. xxi. 10. Comp. ver. 22.

29. *The righteous shall inherit the land.* See ver. 3. The word *inherit* suggests the idea that they are *heirs*, and that God will treat them as his children. ¶ *And dwell therein for ever.* Vers. 3, 18, 27.

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom.* That is, It is a characteristic of the righteous to speak *wise things*; not to utter folly. His conversation is serious, earnest, true, pure; and his words are faithful, kind, and just. This, as a part of human conduct, is one of the reasons why God will bless him with prosperity and length of days. ¶ *And his tongue talketh of judgment.* That is, of just or righteous things. See Matt. xii. 35.

31. *The law of his God* is *in his heart.* That is, he loves it; he thinks of it; he makes it the inward rule of his conduct: Deut. vi. 6; Ps. xl. 8. The word *law* here is a general term for the truth of God,—for all that he has revealed to guide men. As long as that truth is in the heart; as long as it is the object of love; as long as it is suffered to guide and control us, so long will our words and conduct be right. ¶ *None of his steps shall slide.* Marg., *goings.* The idea is, that his course will be firm and steady. He will not fall into sin, and his life will be prosperous and happy. This is in accordance with the general sentiment in the psalm, that religion tends to promote prosperity, happiness, and length of days on the earth.

32. *The wicked watcheth the righteous*, etc. Observes closely; looks out for him; has his eye on him, seeking an opportunity to slay him. See Notes on Ps. x. 8, 9. The sense is, that the wicked are the enemies of the righteous, and seek to do them wrong. It is a characteristic of the

righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

33 The LORD [a] will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn [b] him when he is judged.

34 Wait [c] on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

a 2 Pet. ii. 9. *b* Rom. viii. 1, 34. *c* ver. 7.

wicked that they seek to destroy the righteous. This was manifested in the case of the prophets; in the case of the apostles; in the case of the Saviour; and it has been so manifest in the deaths of the martyrs, and all the persecutions which the Church has suffered, as to justify the general declaration that it is one of the characteristics of a wicked world that it desires to do this.

33. *The* LORD *will not leave him in his hand.* Comp. 2 Peter ii. 9. That is, He will rescue him out of the hand of the wicked; he will not leave him, so that the wicked shall accomplish his purpose. The psalmist here undoubtedly means to refer mainly to what will occur in the present life—to the fact that God will interpose to deliver the righteous from the evil designs of the wicked, as he interposes to save his people from famine and want. The meaning is not that this will *universally* occur, for that would not be true; but that this is the *general* course of things; this is the tendency and bearing of the Divine interpositions and the Divine arrangements. Those interpositions and arrangements are, on the whole, favourable to virtue, and favourable to those who love and serve God; so much so that it is an *advantage* even in the present life to serve God. But this will be absolutely and universally true in the future world. The righteous will be *wholly* and *for ever* placed beyond the reach of the wicked. ¶ *Nor condemn him when he is judged.* Literally, He will not regard or hold him to be *guilty* when he is judged. He will regard and treat him as a righteous man. This may refer either (*a*) to a case where a judgment is pronounced on a good man *by his fellow-men*, by which he is condemned or adjudged to be guilty—meaning that God will not so regard and treat him; or (*b*) to the final judgment, when the cause comes *before God*—meaning that then he will regard and treat him as righteous. Both of these are true; but it seems probable that the former is particularly referred to here. De Wette understands it in the latter sense; Rosenmüller in the former. Rosenmüller remarks that the idea is, that the wicked, when he is not permitted to assail the righteous by violence, makes his appeal to the courts, and seeks to secure his condemnation there, but that God will not permit this. As he has saved him from violence, so he will interpose and save him from an unrighteous condemnation in the courts. This seems to me to be the true idea. Of course, this is to be understood only in a *general* sense, or as marking the *general* course of things under the Divine administration. On this subject, comp. Dr. Taylor's Lectures on Moral Government; vol. i., pp. 252—262. See also Butler's Analogy, *passim*.

34. *Wait on the* LORD. See Notes on ver. 9. Let your hope be from the Lord; depend wholly upon him; have such confidence in him as to expect his gracious interposition in your behalf. ¶ *And keep his way.* Or, walk in the path which he commands. Do not turn from that at any time. Do not allow any temptation, or any opposition, to cause you to swerve from that path. ¶ *And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.* See vers. 3, 9, 18. ¶ *When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see* it. This implies that they would certainly be cut off, and that the righteous would be permitted to see the result of a course

35 I [d] have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a [1] green bay tree.

[d] Job v. 3; Isa. xiv. 14—19.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

[1] Or, *tree that groweth in his own soil.*

of righteousness and one of wickedness. It is not necessarily implied that they would have any satisfaction in seeing the punishment of the wicked; but the meaning is, that they would be permitted to live so as to *see* that one course of life tended to secure the favour of God, and another to incur his displeasure; that there was an advantage in virtue and religion in this life; and the certainty that they would see this is adverted to as a *motive* for leading a life of piety. The result is so sure that a man may, if he live long, see it himself; and the fact that this is so should be an inducement for his leading a holy life. The psalmist proceeds, in vers. 35, 36, to illustrate this idea from his own observation.

35. *I have seen.* I have had an opportunity, in my long life (ver. 25), of witnessing the accuracy of the statement just made, that a righteous man may live to see a confirmation of the truth that wickedness, however prosperous the wicked man may be, will lead to ultimate ruin,—as I have had an opportunity of seeing (vers. 25, 26) the effect of a course of righteousness on the ultimate prosperity and happiness of its possessor. The same experience, with the same result, is referred to in Job v. 3. ¶ *In great power.* The word here used—עָרִיץ, *aritz*—means properly *terrible; inspiring terror.* It is applied to God in Jer. xx. 11; and to powerful nations, Isa. xxv. 3. It is also used in a bad sense, as denoting violent, fierce, lawless, or a tyrant, Isa. xiii. 11; xxv. 4, 5; Job xv. 20; xxvii. 13. Here it may be used in the sense of one who was prosperous and mighty, and as referring to a man who wielded vast power; but there is connected with that also, undoubtedly, the idea that that power was wielded, not for purposes of benevolence, but for injustice, oppression, and wrong. It was a *wicked* man that was thus powerful. ¶ *And spreading himself.* The word here used means properly to be naked; to make naked; to empty; then, to pour oneself out; and then, to spread oneself abroad. It is applied here to a tree that seems to pour itself out, or to spread itself out in every direction,—sending its limbs aloft, and its branches far on every side. ¶ *Like a green bay tree.* Marg., *a green tree that groweth in its own soil.* The *bay tree* is a species of laurel, but there is no evidence that the original word here refers particularly to this, or specifically to any other tree. The original word—אֶזְרָח, *ezrahh*—is derived from זָרַח, *zarahh*, to rise; and then, to spring up as a plant does, and it properly means here, as expressed in the margin, *a native tree;* that is, a tree that grows in its own soil, or that has not been transplanted. Then, also, it comes to denote a native; one born in the country, not a foreigner: Lev. xvi. 29; xviii. 26, *et al.* The *idea* here is that a tree which thus remains in its own soil is more vigorous, and will attain to a larger growth, than one which is transplanted; and thus the figure becomes an emblem of a prosperous and mighty man. *Perhaps*, also, there is included here, respecting the *man*, the idea that he has grown up where he is; that he has not been driven from place to place; that he has had uniform prosperity; that on the very soil which gave him birth he has risen to rank, to wealth, to power. His *life* has been spent in tranquil scenes, where everything seemed to be stable and secure; what his *end* will be, the psalmist states in the next verse.

36. *Yet he passed away.* Comp. Notes on Job xx. 5. The allusion here, of course, is to the *man*, and not to the *tree*, though the grammatical

37 Mark the perfect *man*, and
e Prov. xiv. 32.
behold the upright: for the end
f of *that* man *is* peace.

construction might refer to either. The idea is that he passed out of view —*he was gone;* he had no permanent abode on earth, but with all his pomp and splendour he had disappeared. Neither his prosperity, his greatness, nor his wealth, could secure him a permanent abode on earth. It might be said, also, in reply to this, that the good man passes away and is not. That is true. But the meaning here is, that this occurs *so much more frequently* in the case of a wicked man, or that wickedness is followed so often in this life by the judgment of God in cutting him off, as to show that there is a moral government, and that that government is administered in favour of the righteous, or that it is an advantage in this life to be righteous. It cannot be meant that this is *universally* so here, but that this is the *general* rule, and that it is *so* constant as to show that God *is* on the side of virtue and religion. ¶ *And lo, he* was *not.* He was no more; there was no longer any such person. The word "*lo*" implies that there was some degree of surprise, or that what had occurred was not looked for or expected. The observer had seen him in great power, flourishing, rich, honoured; and, to his astonishment, he soon passed entirely away. ¶ *Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.* This is intended to *confirm* what had been just said, or to show how completely he had disappeared. It might be supposed, perhaps, that his removal was only temporary—that he was still somewhere upon the earth; but the psalmist says that after the most diligent search, he could not find him. He had disappeared entirely from among men.

37. *Mark the perfect* man. In contrast with what happens to the wicked. The word *perfect* here is used to designate a righteous man, or a man who serves and obeys God. See Notes on Job i. 1. The word *mark* here means *observe, take notice of.* The argument is, "Look upon that man in the end, in contrast with the prosperous wicked man. See how the close of life, in his case, differs from that of a wicked man, though the one may have been poor and humble, and the other rich and honoured." The *point* of the psalmist's remark turns on the *end,* or the *termination* of their course; and the idea is, that the end of the two is such as to show that there is an advantage in religion, and that God is the friend of the righteous. Of course this is to be understood in accordance with the main thought in the psalm, as affirming what is of *general* occurrence. ¶ *And behold the upright.* Another term for a pious man. Religion makes a man upright; and if a man is *not* upright in his dealings with his fellow-man, or if what he professes does not make him do *right,* it is the fullest proof that he has no true piety, 1 John iii. 7, 8. ¶ *For the end of* that *man* is *peace.* De Wette renders this, Denn Nachkommen hat der Mann Friedens;—"For a future has the man of peace." So it is rendered by the Latin Vulgate: Sunt reliquiæ homini pacifico. So the LXX. So also Hengstenberg, Rosenmüller, and Prof. Alexander. Tholuck renders it, as in our version, "It shall go well at last to such a man." It seems to me that the connexion demands this construction, and the authority of Tholuck is sufficient to prove that the Hebrew will admit of it. The word rendered *end*—אַחֲרִית, *ahharith*—means properly the last or extreme part; then, the end or issue of anything,—that which comes *after* it; then, the after time, the future, the hereafter: Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1; Gen. xlix. 1; Dan. x. 14. It may, therefore, refer to *anything* future; and would be well expressed by the word *hereafter;*—the *hereafter* of such a man. So it is rendered *my last end* in Num. xxiii. 10; *latter end,* Num. xxiv. 20; *their end,* in Ps. lxxiii.

38 But *f* the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD; *he is* their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

f Matt. xiii. 30.
g Dan. iii. 17—28.

17. It *might*, therefore, refer to all the future. The connexion—the contrast with what happens to the wicked, vers. 36, 38—would seem to imply that it is used here *particularly* and *especially* with reference to the close of life. The contrast is between the course of the one and that of the other, and between the *termination* of the one course and of the other. In the one case, it is ultimate disaster and ruin; in the other, it is ultimate peace and prosperity. The one *issues in*, or is *followed by* death and ruin; the other is succeeded by peace and salvation. Hence the word may be extended without impropriety to *all* the future,—the whole hereafter. The word *peace* is often employed in the Scriptures to denote the effect of true religion, (*a*) as implying reconciliation with God, and (*b*) as denoting the calmness, the tranquillity, and the happiness which results from such reconciliation, from his friendship, and from the hope of heaven. See John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Rom. v. 1; viii. 6; Gal. v. 22; Phil. iv. 7. The meaning here, according to the interpretation suggested above, is, that the *future* of the righteous man—the whole future—would be peace; (*a*) as a general rule, peace or calmness in death as the result of religion; and (*b*) in the coming world, where there will be perfect and eternal peace. As a *usual* fact religious men die calmly and peacefully, sustained by hope and by the presence of God; as a *universal* fact, they are made happy for ever beyond the grave.

38. *But the transgressors.* Sinners; violators of the law of God. ¶ *Shall be destroyed together.* The word *together* here—יַחְדָּו, *yahhdav*—means properly a *union of them*; then, together—either (*a*) in one place, Gen. xiii. 6,—or (*b*) at one time, Ps. iv. 8; or (*c*) all as one, Ps. xiv. 3,—or (*d*) mutually with one another, as when men strive together, Deut. xxv. 11. The idea here is, that one would be destroyed as well as another; that there would be no exception; that they would go to the same ruin. They might be destroyed at different times, or in different modes, but it would be the same destruction in the end. ¶ *The end of the wicked.* The *future* of the wicked. The same word is used here which occurs in ver. 37, as applied to the righteous. The meaning is, that while the *future* of the one would be peace, the *future* of the other would be a *cutting off*, or destruction. ¶ *Shall be cut off.* That is, *they* shall be cut off; or, there will be a cutting off. This means here, evidently, (*a*) that as an ordinary fact they would be cut down before they had reached the full limit of their course, vers. 35, 36; (*b*) in the future world they would be cut off from hope and happiness for ever.

39. *But the salvation of the righteous is of the* LORD. Or, salvation comes to the righteous from the Lord. While the wicked are cut off, the righteous shall be safe. There are evidently two ideas here: (1) that there *will be* salvation to the righteous, while the wicked are cut off; (2) that this comes from the Lord, and not from themselves. It is not owing to any power of their own that they are safe, but is solely because they are kept by the Lord. ¶ He is *their strength in the time of trouble.* See Notes on Ps. ix. 9; xviii. 2.

40. *And the* LORD *shall help them.* He will interpose to defend them when they are in danger and in trouble.

¶ *And deliver them.* Rescue them from their dangers, and from the power of the wicked. ¶ *He shall deliver them from the wicked.* From all the attempts of the wicked to destroy them. ¶ *And save them.* Or, preserve them. He will keep them to everlasting life. ¶ *Because they trust in him.* They rely on him, and not on themselves. This verse is a summing up of the sentiments of the psalm, and is designed to confirm the main thought which runs through it, to wit, that we should not fret, or murmur, or repine at the prosperity of wicked men, ver. 1. The reason ultimately assigned for this is, that whatever may be the danger of the righteous from the designs of wicked men, they will in the end be safe. It will go well with them, for the Lord will keep them. The general course of thought in the psalm is, that, whatever prosperity the wicked now have, it is temporary, for they will soon be cut off; and that whatever troubles now come upon the righteous, they too are temporary, and that their *hereafter* — their *futurity* — will be blessedness and peace. There *is* a moral government: God is the friend of the righteous; along the path of the present life there are proofs that he is so, and beyond the present life he will show himself to be so in their eternal peace. He is the enemy of the wicked; there are evidences in the present life that he is so, and this will be fully and finally manifested in their destruction in the future world. The argument in the psalm, indeed, is mainly drawn from the *present life*,—from what there is to encourage virtue and goodness in the blessings which religion scatters on earth, and by the peaceful termination of the course—as well as from what there is to discourage wickedness and vice, in the fact that the wicked will be cut down and pass away. The argument is, that if this life were all, there are encouragements here to virtue and goodness. In Ps. lxxiii., which in some respects resembles this psalm, the argument which satisfied the mind of the troubled psalmist — troubled at the prosperity of the wicked — is drawn mainly from the future world. Here it is drawn chiefly from the present life; and the main thought here—the practical lesson from the psalm—is, that even with reference to the life that now is—to its security, to its peace, to its blessedness, and to its happy close—it is an advantage to be righteous. It is better to have God for our friend in life, and our support in death, than to have all the external prosperity of wicked men.

PSALM XXXVIII.

I. *Author of the psalm.*—The psalm purports to have been written by David, and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him. There is no tradition to the contrary, and there is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with such a supposition.

II. *The title.*—The psalm is said in the title to be designed "to bring to remembrance." The same title occurs in Ps. lxx., though there is no resemblance between the two, except that they both have reference to the attempts and purposes of the enemies of David, and to trials in different forms which had come from them. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "A Psalm of David, for remembrance concerning the Sabbath." The Septuagint renders it in the same manner. The Arabic: "In which there is a mention of the sabbath." Whence these allusions to the sabbath were derived is unknown, as there is nothing in the Hebrew corresponding with them. The Chaldee Paraphrase has prefixed, "For a good memorial concerning Israel." The Hebrew term used—לְהַזְכִּיר, *lehazkir*—means simply *for bringing to remembrance*, or for reminding. The meaning is, that it is a record for the purpose of *reminding;* that is, of keeping up the *remembrance* of something which had occurred in his own experience, and which might be useful to himself or to others; the record of some valuable lessons which had been learned from what he had experienced in the trials referred to. Comp. Gen. xl. 14; 1 Kings xvii. 18; Ezek. xxi. 24. Gesenius (*Lex.*) renders it, "To bring to remembrance, &c., oneself with God." Grotius says of it, "This psalm is designed to inculcate the perpetual

remembrance of David and his sin, and of the pardon that was granted." There can be no doubt that the psalm had this design of making a permanent record of an important event in the life of the author, or of his *experience* in a time of great calamity; but why this title was affixed only to this psalm and to Ps. lxx. is wholly unknown. There are many other psalms to which, it would seem, the title might have been prefixed with equal propriety, as containing important reminiscences of trials, and of religious experience under those trials.

III. *Occasion of the psalm.* — The particular time or occasion on which the psalm was composed is unknown. There are no recorded events in the life of David to which this psalm would be *particularly* applicable, though, in a life of trial and suffering such as his was, there can be no doubt that there may have been many such occasions. It is impossible now, however, to fix the exact time or occasion with any degree of accuracy or probability. What is known is, that it was with reference to sickness (vers. 3–8, 10, 11), and to the neglect which was evinced, and the cruel treatment which he received, in sickness (vers. 11, 12, 19, 20).

IV. *The contents of the psalm.*

(1.) The psalm describes the condition of one who was suffering from *sickness*, vers. 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11. Some have supposed that this is merely *figurative* language, and that it is designed to represent calamity, trouble, sorrow, heavily pressing upon him *as if* he were sick; others have supposed that it is intended to refer, not to David, but to the people of Israel as afflicted and persecuted, represented under the image of one suffering from disease; but the most natural and obvious interpretation is to regard it as a literal description of one who was suffering under some form of disease. There were doubtless occasions in the long life of David when this actually occurred; and there are occasions in the lives of the people of God of a similar kind, sufficiently numerous to make it proper that an inspired record of the experience of a good man thus suffering should be preserved, as an example of the proper spirit to be manifested in sickness. What was the *character* or *nature* of that sickness may appear in the examination of the particular expressions in the record.

(2.) The condition of the sufferer as aggravated by two things:

(*a*) By the neglect of his friends,—by their turning away from him in his trials, ver. 11;

(*b*) By the efforts of his enemies,—taking advantage of his sickness, and bringing against him accusations which he was not then able to meet, ver. 12.

(3.) He himself traces all these trials, arising either from his disease or from the attacks of his enemies, to his own sins, and regards them all as the expression of the Divine displeasure against his transgressions, vers. 3, 4, 5, 18. The effect of his suffering from sickness was to bring his sins to remembrance—an effect not uncommon, and, under the Providence of God, not undesigned — though he may have erred, as the afflicted often do, in supposing that his sickness was a *specific punishment* for sin, or was intended to correct him for some *particular* transgression.

(4.) His own calmness and meekness in respect to the charges which, amid his other trials, his enemies brought against him, vers. 13, 14. He says that he was like a deaf man that did not hear, and like a dumb man that did not open his mouth. He *seemed* not to hear anything that was said to his disadvantage, and he was as silent as though he had been dumb.

(5.) His earnest prayer for the interposition of God in these circumstances of sickness and trial, vers. 15–22. He says that his only help is in God, ver. 15; he prays that God will not allow his enemies to triumph over him, ver. 16; he says that he is ready to halt, or that his strength is nearly exhausted, and he fears that his patience will utterly give way, ver. 17; he says that he will confess all his sin, ver. 18; he refers to the fact that his enemies are "lively," and are on the alert for his fall, vers. 19, 20; and in view of all this, he earnestly calls on God to save him, vers. 21, 22.

There is a striking resemblance between this psalm and Ps. vi., in the general structure, and in some of the particular expressions. Both appear to have been composed in a time of sickness, though not probably in the *same* sickness; and both express substantially the same feelings. The forty-first psalm, also, appears to have been composed on a similar occasion. In a revelation adapted to mankind, and designed to be applicable in its instructions and promises to the various conditions in which men are placed on the earth, it was to be presumed that there would be a not un-

PSALM XXXVIII.

A Psalm of David to bring to *h* remembrance.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 For thine arrows *i* stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither *is there any* [1] rest in my bones, *k* because of my sin.

h Ps. lxx., *title*. *i* Job vi. 4. [1] *peace*, or, *health*. *k* Ps. li. 8.

frequent reference to the sick bed—to the trials on a couch of languishing. And in an inspired book of *devotion*, like the book of Psalms, designed to illustrate the nature of piety in the various and diversified situations of life, the object of a revelation could not be fully accomplished without an illustration of the feelings of piety in the time of sickness, and in the prospect of death,—for such scenes must occur in the world, and it is eminently in such scenes that we desire to know what is the proper feeling to be cherished; what true religion *is* at such a time; what it will do to sustain and comfort the soul. The book of Psalms, therefore, would not have been complete without such an illustration of the nature of piety; and hence it was every way probable that psalms like this would be composed, and every way improbable that no such psalms would be found in a book of inspired devotion. It seems to me, therefore, unnatural, and not demanded by any proper views of interpretation, to regard this psalm, and the other similar psalms, as De Wette, Hengstenberg, Rosenmüller and others do, and as the Chaldee Paraphrase and Jarchi do, as descriptive of *general calamity, Unglück;*—or of calamity coming upon *a people*—rather than a *particular* affliction in the form of sickness coming upon *an individual*. The great value of the book of Psalms consists in the fact that it furnishes illustrations of the nature and power of true religion in all the varied circumstances of the lives of individual friends of God.

1. *O* LORD, *rebuke me not in thy wrath.* See Notes on Ps. vi. 1, where the same language occurs, except in the change of a single Hebrew *word*, i. e., *wrath*, though expressing the same *idea*. ¶ *Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* See Notes on Ps. vi. 1. The Hebrew in both is the same, except that in this place the negative particle is omitted, but without affecting the sense. It is not improbable that the one was copied from the other, or that this was composed with the language of the former in the memory. Thus we often use language with which we are familiar, as being well adapted to express our ideas.

2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me.* See Notes on Job vi. 4. The word rendered *stick fast*—נָחַת, *nahhath*—means properly to go or come down; to descend; and the literal idea here would be, "thine arrows come down upon me." It is not so much the idea of their *sticking fast* when in the wound or flesh; it is that they come down upon one, and pierce him. The meaning is, that he was afflicted *as if* God had wounded him with arrows,—arrows which pierced deep in his flesh. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlv. 5. The allusion is to the disease with which he was afflicted. ¶ *And thy hand presseth me sore.* The same word is here used which in the former part of the verse is rendered *stick fast*. The idea is, that the hand of God had *descended* or *come down* upon him, prostrating his strength, and laying him on a bed of pain.

3. There is *no soundness in my flesh.* There is no sound place in my flesh; there is no part of my body that is free from disease. The word here used—מְתֹם, *methom*—occurs only in Judges xx. 48, where it is rendered *men;* in Isa. i. 6, and in this place, where it is rendered *soundness*. See Notes on Isa. i. 6. It means that the body was wholly diseased; but what was the nature of the disease we are not informed. It would seem, however, that it was some cutaneous disease, or some disease that produced outward and loathsome erup-

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine [l] head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

[l] Ezra ix. 6.

tions that made his friends withdraw from him, vers. 7, 11; comp. Ps. xli. 8. ¶ *Because of thine anger.* That is, he regarded this as a punishment for sin; a specific manifestation of the Divine displeasure on account of some particular offence or act of transgression. He does not refer, however, to the particular sin which he regarded as the cause of his sickness, and it is probable that this is just an instance of that state of mind, often morbid, in which we consider a particular calamity that comes upon us as a special proof of the Divine displeasure. There are, undoubtedly, cases when sickness may be properly thus regarded;—but it should be observed that, as this is not the universal rule in regard to sickness and other trials,—as they come upon us under general laws, and because in sweeping over a community they often fall upon the righteous as well as the wicked,—we should not infer at once, when *we* are sick or otherwise afflicted, that it is for any *particular* sin, or that it is proof of any special displeasure of God against us. It is undoubtedly right to regard *all* affliction as having a close connexion with sin, and to allow any calamity to *suggest* to us the idea of our depravity, for sin is the original cause of all the wretchedness and woe on earth; but under this general law we cannot always determine the *particular* reason why calamity comes on *us*. It may have other purposes and ends than that of being a specific *punishment* for our offences. ¶ *Neither* is there any *rest in my bones.* Marg., *peace* or *health.* The Hebrew word means *peace.* The idea is, that there was no comfort; no rest. His bones were filled with constant pain. The flesh *and the bones* constitute the entire man; and the idea here is, that he was universally diseased. The disease pervaded every part of the body. ¶ *Because of my sin.* Regarding his sin as the immediate cause of his suffering. In a general sense, as has been remarked above, it is not wrong to regard sin as the cause of all our misery, and we may allow our suffering to be, in some degree, a measure or gauge of the evil of sin. The error consists in our regarding a particular form of trial as the punishment of a particular sin. The effect in the case of the psalmist was undoubtedly to bring to remembrance his sins; to impress his mind deeply with a sense of the evil of sin; to humble him at the recollection of guilt. This effect is not improper or undesirable, provided it does not lead us to the conclusion, often erroneous, that our affliction has come upon us on account of a particular transgression. That *may* be so indeed; but the idea that that is the universal rule in regard to affliction is one which we are not required to entertain. See Notes on Luke xiii. 1–5.

4. *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head.* This is merely an enlargement of the idea suggested in the last verse—that his present sickness was to be traced to his sin, and that he was suffering the punishment for sin. The idea is here that his sins were very numerous and very aggravated. They had risen up around him, or had so accumulated that the mass rose, like waves of the sea, above his head. A somewhat similar idea—though the thought there refers rather to the *number* of sins than the *degree* of guilt—occurs in Ps. xl. 12: "Mine iniquities .... are more than the hairs of my head." ¶ *As an heavy burden,* etc. That is, they are so heavy that I cannot bear them, and my frame has sunk under them. This might mean either that the *sense* of sin was so great that he could not bear up under it, but had been crushed by it (comp. Ps. xxxii. 3, 4); or that on account of sin, *as if* it were a heavy weight, he had been crushed by disease.

5 My wounds [m] stink, *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.

6 I am [1] troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease;* and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

[m] Isa. i. 5, 6. [1] *wearied.*

The general idea is, that the real *cause* of his sickness was the fact that he was a great sinner, and that God was punishing him for it.

5. *My wounds stink.* The word rendered *wounds* here means properly the swelling or wales produced by stripes. See Notes on Isa. i. 6; liii. 5. The meaning here is, that he was under *chastisement* for his sin; that the stripes or blows on account of it had not only left a mark and produced a swelling, but that the skin itself had been broken, and that the flesh had become corrupt, and the sore offensive. Many expositors regard this as a mere figurative representation of the sorrow produced by the consciousness of sin; and of the loathsome nature of sin, but it seems to me that the whole connexion rather requires us to understand it of bodily suffering, or of disease. ¶ And *are corrupt.* The word here used—מָקּוּ, *makak*—means properly to melt; to pine away; and then, to flow, to run, as sores and ulcers do. The meaning here is, My sores run; to wit, with corrupt matter. ¶ *Because of my foolishness.* Because of my sin, regarded as folly. Comp. Notes on Ps. xiv. 1. The Scripture idea is that sin is the highest folly. Hence the psalmist, at the same time that he confesses his sin, acknowledges also its foolishness. The idea of sin and that of folly become so blended together,—or they are so entirely synonymous,—that the one term may be used for the other.

6. *I am troubled.* Marg., *wearied.* The Hebrew word means to bend, to curve; then, to be distorted, to writhe with pain, convulsions, and spasms. In Isa. xxi. 3, the same word is rendered, "*I was bowed down* at the hearing of it;" that is, Sorrow so took hold of him, that at the intelligence he writhed with pain as a woman in travail. So here it means that he was bent, or bowed down, or that he writhed in pain as the result of his iniquities. ¶ *I am bowed down greatly.* Comp. Ps. xxxv. 14. The word means properly to bow down; then, to be brought low; to be depressed with pain, grief, sorrow: Ps. x. 10; Isa. ii. 11. ¶ *I go mourning all the day long.* Constantly; without any intermission. On the word rendered *go mourning*—קָדַר, *kadar*—see Notes on Ps. xxxv. 14. The idea here is, that, on account of sin, he was crushed and bowed down as a mourner is with his sorrows, and that he appeared constantly as he walked about with these badges of grief and heavy sorrow. The disease which he had, and which was so offensive to himself (ver. 5), and to others (ver. 11), was like the filthy and foul garments which mourners put on as expressive of their sorrow. See Notes on Job i. 20; ii. 8.

7. *For my bones are filled with a loathsome* disease. This would seem to indicate the *seat* of the disease, though not its nature. The word here used, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys, to which the fat adheres. The word rendered *loathsome*—the word *disease* being supplied by our translators—is derived from קָלָה, *kalah*, a word which means to roast, to parch, as fruit, grain, etc.; and then, in the form used here, it means scorched, burned; hence, a burning or inflammation; and the whole phrase would be synonymous with *an inflammation of the kidneys.* The *word* here used does not imply that there was any eruption, or ulcer, though it would seem from ver. 5 that this was the fact, and that the inflammation had produced this effect. ¶ *And* there is

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have [n] roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

9 Lord, all my desire *is* before [o] thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light [p] of mine eyes, it also is [1] gone from me.

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof [q] from my [2] sore; and my [3] kinsmen stand [r] afar off.

[n] Ps. xxxii. 3. [o] Ps. cxlv. 19. [p] Lam. v. 17.
[1] *not with.* [q] Matt. xxvi. 56; Luke x. 31, 32.
[2] *stroke.* [3] Or, *my neighbours.* [r] Luke xxiii. 49.

no soundness in my flesh. See ver. 3. His disease was so deep-seated and so pervading, that there did not seem to be *any* soundness in his flesh. His whole body seemed to be diseased.

8. *I am feeble.* The word here used means properly to be cold, or without warmth; and then, to be torpid or languid. Comp. Gen. xlv. 26. Would not this be well represented by the idea of a "*chill*"? ¶ *And sore broken.* This word means to break in pieces; to beat small; to crush; and then it may be used to denote being broken in spirit, or crushed by pain and sorrow: Isa. lvii. 15; liii. 5; xix. 10. ¶ *I have roared.* I have cried out on account of my suffering. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 1. ¶ *By reason of the disquietness of my heart.* The word here rendered *disquietness* means properly a *roaring*, as of the sea: Isa. v. 30; and then, a groaning, or roaring, as of the afflicted. Here the *heart* is represented as *roaring* or *crying out.* The lips only gave utterance to the deeper groanings of the heart.

9. *Lord, all my desire* is *before thee.* That is, Thou knowest all that I would ask or that I need. This is the expression of one who felt that his only hope was in God, and that He fully understood the case. There was no need of repeating the request. He was willing to leave the whole case with God. ¶ *And my groaning is not hid from thee.* My sighing; the expression of my sorrow and anguish. As God certainly heard these sighs, and as He wholly understood the case, David hoped that He would mercifully interpose in his behalf.

10. *My heart panteth.* The word rendered *panteth*, in its original form, means properly to go about; to travel around; and then, to travel around as a merchant or pedlar, or for purposes of traffic: Gen. xxiii. 16; xxxvii. 28; xlii. 34. Applied to the heart, as it is here, it means to move about rapidly; to palpitate; to beat quick. It is an expression of pain and distress, indicated by a rapid beating of the heart. ¶ *My strength faileth me.* It is rapidly failing. He regarded himself as rapidly approaching death. ¶ *As for the light of mine eyes.* My vision; my sight. ¶ *It also is gone from me.* Marg., as in Heb., *is not with me.* This is usually an indication of approaching death; and it would seem from all these symptoms that he appeared to be drawing near to the end of life. Comp. Ps. xiii. 3; vi. 7; xxxi. 9.

11. *My lovers.* See Notes on Ps. xxxi. 11. The reference here is to those who professed to be his friends. ¶ *And my friends.* The word here used means properly an acquaintance, a companion, a friend, Job ii. 11; xix. 21; then, a lover, a friend, a neighbour. The phrase here would be synonymous with our word *kinsmen.* ¶ *Stand aloof.* They are unwilling to come near me; they leave me to suffer alone. ¶ *From my sore.* Marg., *stroke.* The Hebrew word means properly a stroke, a blow, Deut. xvii. 8; xxi. 5; then a stroke in the sense of calamities or judgments, such as God brings upon men: Gen xii. 17; Ex. xi. 1. The meaning here is, that they stand aloof from him, or refuse to come near him, as if he were afflicted with some contagious disease. ¶ *And my kinsmen.* Marg., *neighbours.* The Hebrew word here used —קָרוֹב, *karob*—means properly near,

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me:* and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

13 But [s] I, as a deaf *man,* heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.

14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.

[s] 2 Sam. xvi. 10, etc.; Isa. xlii. 19, 20.

nigh; spoken of a place, Gen. xix. 20; then of time, Isa. xiii. 6; then of kindred or affinity, Num. xxvii. 11; and then of friendship, meaning our intimate acquaintance—as we should say, those who are *near* to us, Job xix. 14. The word would be applicable to neighbours or to warm personal friends.

12. *They also that seek after my life.* This was a new aggravation of his affliction, that those who were his enemies now sought to accomplish their purposes against him with better hopes of success, by taking advantage of his sickness. ¶ *Lay snares* for me. On the meaning of this phrase, see Notes on Ps. ix. 15. The idea here is that they sought this opportunity of ensnaring or entrapping him so as to ruin him. They took advantage of the fact that he was weak and helpless, and of the fact that he was forsaken or abandoned by his friends, to accomplish his ruin. *How* this was done is not stated. It might have been by their coming on him when he was thus helpless; or it might have been by endeavouring in his weak condition to extort confessions or promises from him that might be turned to his ruin. An enemy may hope to succeed much better when the one opposed is sick than when he is well, and may take advantage of his weak state of body and mind, and of the fact that he seems to be forsaken by all, to accomplish what could not be done if he were in the enjoyment of health, or sustained by powerful friends, or by a public opinion in his favour. ¶ *And they that seek my hurt.* They who seek to injure me. ¶ *Speak mischievous things.* Slanderous words. They charge on me things that are false, and that tend to injure me. The very fact that he was thus afflicted, they might urge (in accordance with a prevailing belief, and with the conviction of the psalmist also, vers. 3–5) as a proof of guilt. This was done by the three friends of Job; and the enemies of the psalmist may thus have taken advantage of his sickness to circulate false reports about him which he could not then well meet. ¶ *And imagine deceits.* Imagine or feign deceitful things; things which they know to be false or unfounded. ¶ *All the day long.* Constantly. They seem to have no other employment. See Ps. xxxv. 20.

13. *But I, as a deaf* man, *heard not.* I was *as if* I had been deaf, and did not hear them or know what they were about. I took no notice of what they did any more than if I had not heard them. That is, he did not reply to them; he did not become angry; he was as calm and patient as if they had said nothing. ¶ *And* I was *as a dumb man* that *openeth not his mouth.* As if I were a man that could not speak. I was perfectly silent under all this persecution. Comp. 2 Sam. xvi. 10. How eminently true was this of the Saviour! Isa. liii. 7; 1 Peter ii. 23; Matt. xxvi. 63; xxvii. 12, 14.

14. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not.* The sentiment in the former verse is repeated here to show the greatness of his patience and forbearance, or to fix the attention on the fact that one who was so calumniated and wronged could bear it patiently. ¶ *And in whose mouth* are *no reproofs.* As a man who *never* reproved another; who, whatever might be the wrong which he endured, never replied to it; as he would be who was *incapable* of reproof, or who had no *faculty* for reproving. The whole of this is de-

15 For [1] in thee, O LORD, do
I hope: thou wilt [2] hear, O LORD
my God.
16 For I said, *Hear me*, lest

[1] *thee do I wait for.* [2] Or, *answer.*

signed to show his entire patience under the wrongs which he suffered.

15. *For in thee, O* LORD, *do I hope.* This shows the reason or ground of his patience. He committed his whole cause to God. He believed that God would take care of his reputation, and that he would vindicate him. See Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6. He had no doubt that He would protect his character, and that, notwithstanding the reproaches of his enemies, his true character would at last be made to shine forth, so that all men would see that he had been unjustly aspersed. The exact idea here is expressed, and the sentiment was beautifully and perfectly illustrated, in what is said of the Lord Jesus:—"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," 1 Peter ii. 23. ¶ *Thou wilt hear, O* LORD *my God.* Marg., as in Heb., *answer.* The idea is, that God would answer his prayers, and that his character would, in answer to those prayers, be set right before the world.

16. *For I said.* This is the prayer to which he referred in the previous verse. He prayed that he might not be permitted to fall away under the influence of his sins and sufferings; that his faith might remain firm; that he might not be allowed to act so as to justify the accusations of his enemies, or to give them occasion to rejoice over his fall. The entire prayer (vers. 16–18) is one that is based on the consciousness of his own weakness, and his liability to sin, if left to himself; on the certainty that if God *did* not interpose, his sins would get the mastery over him, and he would become in his conduct all that his enemies desired, and be in fact all that they had falsely charged on him. ¶ Hear me, *lest* otherwise *they should rejoice over me.* *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me.
17 For I *am* ready [3] to halt,

[3] *for halting.*

Literally, "For I said, lest they should rejoice over me." It is the language of earnest desire that they might *not* thus be allowed to rejoice over his fall. The same sentiment occurs substantially in Ps. xiii. 3, 4. The motive is a right one; alike (*a*) in reference to ourselves personally — that our foes may not triumph over us by the ruin of our character; and (*b*) in reference to its bearing on the cause of virtue and religion—that that cause may not suffer by our misconduct; comp. Ps. lxix. 6. ¶ *When my foot slippeth.* (*a*) When my foot really *has* slipped, or when *I have* committed sin (as the psalmist did not deny that he had done, vers. 3, 4, 5, 18); or (*b*) when it *might* occur *again* (as he felt was possible); or (*c*) *if* I deviate in the slightest degree from perfect virtue; *if* I inadvertently do anything wrong. The slipping of the foot is an indication of the want of firmness, and hence it comes to represent the falling into sin. ¶ *They magnify* themselves *against me.* See Ps. xxxv. 26. They exult over me; they triumph; they boast. They *make themselves great* on my fall, or by my being put down. This he says (*a*) they were *disposed* to do, for they had shown a disposition to do it whenever he had fallen into sin; (*b*) he apprehended that they *would* do it again, and they had already begun to magnify themselves against him, *as if* they were certain that it would occur. He did not deny that there was ground to fear this, for he felt that his strength was almost gone (ver. 17), and that God only could uphold him, and save him from justifying all the expectations of his enemies.

17. *For I* am *ready to halt.* Marg., as in Heb., *for halting.* The word from which the word used here is derived means properly to lean on one side, and then to halt or limp. The

and my sorrow *is* continually before me.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry [t] for my sin.

19 But mine enemies [1] *are* lively, *and* they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that* good *is*.

[t] 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.
[1] being *living, are strong.*

meaning here is, that he was like one who was limping along, and who was ready to fall; that is, in the case here referred to, he felt that his strength was almost gone, and that he was in continual danger of falling into sin, or sinking under his accumulated burdens, and of thus giving occasion for all that his enemies said of him, or occasion for their triumphing over him. Men often have this feeling,—that their sorrows are so great that they cannot hope to hold out much longer, and that if God does not interpose they *must* fall. ¶ *And my sorrow* is *continually before me.* That is, my grief or suffering is unintermitted. Probably the reference here is particularly to that which *caused* his grief, or which was the source of his trouble—his sin. The fact that he was a sinner was never absent from his mind; *that* was the source of all his trouble; *that* was what so pressed upon him that it was likely to crush him to the dust.

18. *For I will declare mine iniquity.* That is, he was not disposed to hide his sin. He would make no concealment of the fact that he regarded himself as a sinner. He admitted this to be true, and he admitted that his sin was the cause of all his troubles. It was the fact that he was a sinner that so painfully affected his mind; and he was not disposed to attempt to conceal it from any one. ¶ *I will be sorry for my sin.* I will not deny it; I will not apologise for it. I admit the truth of what my conscience charges on me; I admit the correctness and the propriety of the Divine judgment by which I have been afflicted on account of my sin; I desire to repent of all my transgressions, and to turn from them. Comp. Lev. xxvi. 41. The calamity brought upon the psalmist for his sin had produced the desired effect in this respect, that it had brought him to true repentance; and now, with the full confession of his sin, he was anxious only lest he should fall utterly, and should give his enemies, and the enemies of the truth, the occasion to triumph over him which they desired.

19. *But mine enemies* are *lively*, etc. De Wette renders this, "My enemies live and are strong." The word translated *lively*—חַיִּים, *hhayyim*—means properly *living, being alive.* The literal translation would be, "My enemies, being alive, are strong." The idea is, that while he was weak and apparently near to death, they were in the full vigour of life and health. They were able to engage in active efforts to accomplish their purposes. They could take advantage of his weakness; and he could not contend with them, for he was no *match* for them. In every respect they had the advantage of him; and he prays, therefore, for the Divine interposition in his behalf. ¶ *And they that hate me wrongfully.* Heb., *falsely.* See Ps. xxxv. 19. ¶ *Are multiplied.* They are numerous. They are constantly increasing.

20. *They also that render evil for good.* They whose characteristic it is to return evil for good, are opposed to me. This implies that those who were now seeking his ruin had been formerly benefited by him. They were persons who cherished no grateful recollection of favours bestowed on them, but who found a pleasure in persecuting and wronging their benefactor. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 12–16. ¶ *Are my adversaries.* Are now opposed to me; have become my enemies. ¶ *Because I follow* the thing

21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

22 Make haste [1] to help me, O Lord my salvation.

[1] *for my help.*

that *good* is. This properly means, Because I follow the good. The Hebrew word rendered *because* — תַּחַת, *tahhath* — means properly the lower part; what is underneath; then, below; beneath. The idea here is, that the *underlying reason* of what they did was that he followed good, or that he was a righteous man; or, as we say, This was *at the bottom* of all their dealings with him. Sinner as he felt he was (and as he acknowledged he was) before God, and true as it was that his *sickness* was brought upon him by God for his sinfulness, yet the reason why *men* treated him as they did, was that he was a friend of God—a religious man; and their conduct, therefore, was sheer persecution. We may, with entire consistency, be very humble before God, and acknowledge that we deserve all that *He* brings upon us; and yet, at the same time, we may be sensible that we have not wronged men, and that *their* conduct toward us is wholly undeserved, is most ungrateful, is sheer malignity against us.

21. *Forsake me not, O* LORD. That is, Do not leave me in my troubles, my sickness, my sorrow. Leave me not to die; leave me not to murmur and dishonour thee; leave me not to the reproaches of my enemies. ¶ *O my God, be not far from me.* See Ps. xxxv. 22. Comp. Ps. x. 1; xiii. 1.

22. *Make haste to help me.* Marg., as in Heb., *for my help.* This is an earnest prayer that God would come immediately to his rescue. ¶ *O Lord my salvation.* See Notes on Psalm xxvii. 1. The effect, therefore, of the trials that came upon the psalmist was to lead him to cry most earnestly to God. Those sorrows led him to God. This is one of the designed effects of affliction. Trouble never accomplishes its proper effect unless it leads us to God; and anything that *will* lead us to him is a gain in the end. The deeper our trouble, therefore, the greater may be the ultimate good to us; and at the end of life, when we come to look over all that has happened in our journey through this world, that on which we may look back with most satisfaction and gratitude may be the sorrows and afflictions that have befallen us,—for these will be then seen to have been among the chief instrumentalities by which we were weaned from sin; by which we were led to the Saviour; by which we were induced to seek a preparation for heaven. No Christian, when he comes to die, ever feels that he has been too much afflicted, or that any trial has come upon him for which there was not occasion, and which was not designed and adapted to do him good.

PSALM XXXIX.

This psalm purports to be a Psalm of David, but the special occasion in his life when it was composed is not specified, and it cannot now be ascertained. It was evidently, like the previous psalm, in a time of affliction, but to what particular affliction it refers is unknown. It is, however, of so general a character, and expresses feelings which so often spring up in the mind of the afflicted, that it is adapted for general use in the world, and nothing would be gained, perhaps, if we *could* ascertain the particular trial in the life of the author of the psalm to which it had referred. On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. The addition to that in this place, "to Jeduthun," implies, according to the rendering in our common version, that *Jeduthun*, at the time when the psalm was composed, occupied that position; and this is probable. The word Jeduthun means properly *praising, celebrating;* but here it is used evidently as a proper name, and designates some one who was placed over the music, or who had charge of it. The reference is to one of the choristers appointed by David. Jeduthun is expressly mentioned, among others, as having been appointed for this service, 1 Chron. xvi.

41: "And with them Heman and Jeduthun . . . to give thanks to the Lord." So, also, ver. 42: "And with them Heman and Jeduthun, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God." See, also, 1 Chron. xxv. 6; 2 Chron. xxxv. 15. It would seem, also, from Neh. xi. 17, that his descendants held the same office in his time.

The psalm was composed by one who was in trouble, and who had such thoughts in his affliction that he did not dare to express them for fear that they would do injury to the cause of religion. He was sad and dispirited. He could not understand the reason of the Divine dealings. He did not know why he was thus afflicted. He did not see the justice, the propriety, or the benevolence of the Divine arrangements by which the life of man was made so short and so vain, and by which he was called to suffer so much. There was, in his case, a conscious spirit of complaining against the Divine arrangements; or there was so much that, in his view, was mysterious and apparently inconsistent with benevolence in the Divine dealings, that he did not dare to express what was going on in his own mind, or to give vent to the secret thoughts of his soul; and he therefore resolved that he would keep silence, and would say nothing on the subject, especially when the wicked were before him. He bore this as long as he could, and then he gave vent to his suppressed emotions, and sought comfort in prayer.

The psalm, therefore, consists of two parts:—

I. His purpose to keep silence; to say nothing; to suppress the emotions which were struggling in his bosom, or not to give utterance to what was passing in his mind, lest, by such an expression, he should strengthen and confirm the wicked in what they were thinking about, or in their views of God. So far did he carry this, that he says he resolved to hold his "peace *even from good*;" that is, he resolved that he would say *nothing*, lest he should be tempted to say something which would injure the cause of religion, and which he would have occasion to regret, vers. 1, 2.

II. The fact that he was constrained to speak; that he could not confine his thoughts to his own bosom; that he was in such anguish that he *must* find relief by giving utterance to what was passing in his soul. This occupies the remainder of the psalm, vers. 3-13. This part of the psalm embraces the following points:—

(1.) The depth and anguish of his feeling; the fact that his feelings became so intense, like a pent-up fire in his bosom, that he could not but speak and make known his thoughts, ver. 3.

(2.) The utterance in words of the thoughts which he had been cherishing, which gave him so much trouble, and which he had been unwilling to express before the wicked, lest he should confirm them in their views about God and his dealings, vers. 4-6. These thoughts pertained to his contemplation of human life,—its brevity, its vanity, and its sorrows; to his doubts and perplexities about the purpose for which such a being as man was made; and to the darkness of his own mind concerning the reasons why God had made man thus, and why he dealt thus with him. Why was life so short? Why was it so vain? Why was it so full of sorrow?

(3.) His earnest appeal to God in this state of mind, vers. 7-13.

(*a*) He says that his only hope was in God, ver. 7.

(*b*) He asks for deliverance from his transgressions—that is, here, from the calamities which had come upon him for his sins, ver. 8.

(*c*) He says that he had been dumb before God, and had endeavoured not to murmur at his dealings, ver. 9.

(*d*) He refers to the fact that when God undertakes to rebuke man for his iniquity, man cannot stand before him —that his beauty is made to consume away like a moth, vers. 10, 11.

(*e*) He earnestly cries, therefore, to God, and prays that he would deliver him, vers. 12, 13. He asks for strength in these struggles and trials, before he should go forth and be no more.

The psalm will be found to express feelings which often pass through the minds of even good men in regard to the mysteries of our condition here, and will be found to be adapted to calm down those feelings which often arise in the soul, and which could not be expressed without doing injury by paining the hearts of the good, and by confirming the wicked in their notions; to silence the murmurings of the heart; and to bring the soul into a state of humble acquiescence before God under a recognition that all the events of life are controlled by his hand.

PSALM XXXIX.

To the chief Musician, *even* to *u* Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: *v* I will keep [1] my mouth with a bridle, while *w* the wicked is before me.

u 1 Chron. xvi. 41.

v Prov. xxi. 23; James iii. 2, etc.

[1] *a bridle*, or, *muzzle for my mouth.*

w Col. iv. 5.

1. *I said.* This refers to a resolution which he had formed. He does not say, however, at what time of his life the resolution was adopted, or how long a period had elapsed from the time when he formed the resolution to the time when he thus made a record of it. He had formed the resolution on some occasion when he was greatly troubled with anxious thoughts; when, as the subsequent verses show, his mind was deeply perplexed about the Divine administration, or the dealings of God with mankind. It would seem that this train of thought was suggested by his own particular trials (vers. 9, 10), from which he was led to reflect on the mysteries of the Divine administration in general, and on the fact that man had been subjected by his Creator to so much trouble and sorrow,—and that, under the Divine decree, human life was so short and so vain. ¶ *I will take heed to my ways.* To wit, in respect to this matter. I will be cautious, circumspect, prudent. I will not offend or pain the heart of others. The particular thing here referred to was, the resolution not to give utterance to the thoughts which were passing in his mind in regard to the Divine administration. He felt that he was in danger, if he stated what he thought on the subject, of saying things which would do injury, or which he would have occasion to regret, and he therefore resolved to keep silent. ¶ *That I sin not with my tongue.* That I do not utter sentiments which will be wrong, and which I shall have occasion to repent; sentiments which would do injury to those who are already *disposed* to find ground of complaint against God, and who would thus be furnished with arguments to confirm them in their views. Good men often have such thoughts passing through their minds;—thoughts reflecting on the government of God as unequal and severe; thoughts which, if they were suggested, would tend to confirm the wicked and the sceptical in their views; thoughts which they hope, in respect to themselves, to be able to calm down by meditation and prayer, but which would do only unmitigated harm if they were communicated to other men, especially to wicked men. ¶ *I will keep my mouth with a bridle.* The word here used means rather a *muzzle*, or something placed *over* the mouth. The bridle is to restrain or check or guide the horse; the muzzle was something to bind or fasten the mouth so as to prevent biting or eating. Deut. xxv. 4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." See Notes on 1 Cor. ix. 9. The meaning here is, that he would restrain himself from uttering what was passing in his mind. ¶ *While the wicked is before me.* In their presence. He resolved to do this, as suggested above, lest if he should utter what was passing in his own mind,—if he should state the difficulties in regard to the Divine administration which he saw and felt,—if he should give expression to the sceptical or hard thoughts which occurred to him at such times, it would serve only to confirm them in their wickedness, and strengthen them in their alienation from God. A similar state of feeling, and on this very subject, is referred to by the psalmist (Ps. lxxiii. 15), where he says that if he should utter what was really passing in his mind, it would greatly pain and offend those who were the true children of God; would fill their minds with doubts and difficulties which might never occur to themselves: "If I say, I will speak thus;

2 I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was [1] stirred.

[1] *troubled.*

behold, I shall offend against the generation of thy children." As illustrations of this state of feeling in the minds of good men, and as evidence of the fact that, as in the case of the psalmist, their existence in the mind, even in the severest and the most torturing form, is not proof that the man in whose bosom they arise is not a truly pious man, I make the following extracts as expressing the feelings of two of the most sincere and devoted Christian men that ever lived,—both eminently useful, both in an eminent degree ornaments to the Church,—Cecil and Payson:—"I have read all the most acute, and learned, and serious infidel writers, and have been really surprised at their poverty. The process of my mind has been such on the subject of revelation, that I have often thought Satan has done more for me than the best of them; for I have had, and could have produced, arguments that appeared to me far more weighty than any I ever found in them against revelation." *Cecil.*—Dr. Payson says in a letter to a friend:—"There is one trial which you cannot know experimentally: it is that of being obliged to preach to others when one doubts of everything, and can scarcely believe that there is a God. All the atheistical, deistical, and heretical objections which I meet with in books are childish babblings compared with those which Satan suggests, and which he urges upon the mind with a force which seems irresistible. Yet I am often obliged to write sermons, and to preach when these objections beat upon me like a whirlwind, and almost distract me."

2. *I was dumb with silence.* Comp. Ps. xxxviii. 13. The addition of the words "with silence," means that he was *entirely* or *absolutely* dumb; he said nothing at all. The idea is, that he did not allow himself to give utterance to the thoughts which were passing in his mind in regard to the Divine dealings. He kept his thoughts to himself, and endeavoured to suppress them in his own bosom. ¶ *I held my peace,* even *from good.* I said nothing. I did not even say what I *might* have said in vindication of the ways of God. I did not even endeavour to defend the Divine character, or to explain the reasons of the Divine dealings, or to suggest any considerations which would tend to calm down the feelings of complaint and dissatisfaction which might be rising in the minds of other men as well as my own. ¶ *And my sorrow was stirred.* The anguish of my mind; my trouble. The word "*stirred*" here, rendered in the margin *troubled,* means that the very fact of attempting to suppress his feelings,—the purpose to say nothing in the case,—was the means of increased anguish. His trouble on the subject found no vent for itself in words, and at length it became so insupportable that he sought relief by giving utterance to his thoughts, and by coming to God to obtain relief. The state of mind referred to here is that which often occurs when a man broods over his own troubled thoughts, and dwells upon things which are in themselves improper and rebellious. We are under no necessity of endeavouring to vindicate the psalmist in what he here did; nor should we take his conduct in this respect as our example. He evidently himself, on reflection, regarded this as wrong; and recorded it not as a pattern for others, but as a faithful transcript of what was passing at the time through his own mind. Yet, wrong as it was, it was what often occurs even in the minds of good men. Even they, as in the cases referred to above, often have thoughts about God and his dealings which they do not dare to express, and which it would do harm to express. They, therefore, hide them in their own bosom, and often experience just what the psalmist did,—increased trouble and perplexity from the very purpose to

3 My heart was hot within me: while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue,

4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know [1] how frail I *am*.

[1] Or, *what time I have* here.

suppress them. They should go at once to God. They may say to *him* what it would not be proper to say to men. They may pour out all their feelings before him in prayer, with the hope that *in* such acts of praying, and in the answers which they will receive to their prayers, they may find relief.

3. *My heart was hot within me.* My mind became more and more excited; my feelings more and more intense. The attempt to suppress my emotions only more and more enkindled them. ¶ *While I was musing the fire burned.* Literally, "*in my meditation the fire burned.*" That is, while I was dwelling on the subject; while I was agitating it in my mind; while I thought about it,—the flame was enkindled, and my thoughts found utterance. He was unable longer to suppress his feelings, and he gave vent to them in words. Comp. Jer. xx. 9; Job xxxii. 18, 19. ¶ Then *spake I with my tongue.* That is, in the words which are recorded in this psalm. He gave vent to his pent-up feelings in the language which follows. Even though there *was* a feeling of murmuring and complaining, he sought relief in stating his real difficulties before God, and in seeking from him direction and support.

4. LORD, *make me to know mine end.* This expresses evidently the substance of those anxious and troubled thoughts (vers. 1, 2) to which he had been unwilling to give utterance. His thoughts turned on the shortness of life; on the mystery of the Divine arrangement by which it had been made so short; and on the fact that so many troubles and sorrows had been crowded into a life so frail and so soon to terminate. With some impatience, and with a consciousness that he had been indulging feelings on this subject which were not proper, and which would do injury if they were expressed *before men,* he now pours out these feelings before God, and asks what *is* to be the end of this; how long this is to continue; when his own sorrows will cease. It was an impatient desire to know when the end would be, with a spirit of insubmission to the arrangements of Providence by which his life had been made so brief, and by which so much suffering had been appointed. ¶ *And the measure of my days, what it* is. How long I am to live; how long I am to bear these accumulated sorrows. ¶ That *I may know how frail I* am. Marg., *What time I have* here. Prof. Alexander renders this, *when I shall cease.* So De Wette. The Hebrew word here used—חָדֵל, *hhadail*—means *ceasing to be;* hence, *frail;* then, destitute, left, forsaken. An exact translation would be, "that I may know at what (time) or (point) I am ceasing, or about to cease." It is equivalent to a prayer that he might know when these sufferings—when a life so full of sorrow—would come to an end. The language is an expression of impatience; the utterance of a feeling which the psalmist knew was not right in itself, and which would do injury if expressed before men, but which the intensity of his feelings would not permit him to restrain, and to which he, therefore, gives utterance before God. Similar expressions of impatience in view of the sufferings of a life so short as this, and with so little to alleviate its sorrows, may be seen much amplified in Job iii. 1–26; vi. 4–12; vii. 7; xiv. 1–13. Before we *blame* the sacred writers for the indulgence of these feelings, let us carefully examine our own hearts, and recall what has passed through our own minds in view of the mysteries of the Divine administration; and

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and *x* mine age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man [1] at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

x Ps. xc. 4, etc.

6 Surely every man walketh in [2] a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he *y* heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

[1] *settled.* [2] *an image.*
y Eccles. ii. 18, etc; Luke xii. 20, 21.

let us remember that one great object of the Bible is to *record* the actual feelings of men — not to *vindicate* them, but to show what human nature *is* even in the best circumstances, and what the human heart is when as yet but partially sanctified.

5. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* Literally, "Lo, handbreadths hast thou given my days." The word rendered *handbreadth* means properly the spread hand; the palm; the hand when the four fingers are expanded. The word is then used to denote anything very short or brief. It is one of the smallest natural measures, as distinguished from the "foot"—*i. e.* the length of the foot; and from the cubit,—*i. e.* the length of the arm to the elbow. It is the *shortness* of life, therefore, that is the subject of painful and complaining reflection here. Who has not been in a state of mind to sympathise with the feelings of the psalmist? Who is there that does not often wonder, when he thinks of what he could and would accomplish on earth if his life extended to a thousand years, and when he thinks of the great interests at stake in reference to another world which God has made dependent on so short a life? Who can at all times so calm down his feelings as to give utterance to no expressions of impatience that life is so soon to terminate? Who is there that reflects on the great interests at stake that has not asked the question *why* God has not given man more time to prepare for eternity? ¶ *And mine age.* Or, my life. The word here used—חֶלֶד, *hheled*—means properly *duration of life*, lifetime; and then, life itself; Job xi. 17. ¶ Is *as nothing.* That is, it is so short that it seems to be nothing at all. ¶ *Before thee.* As over against thee; that is, in comparison with thee. Comp. Isa. xl. 17, "All nations *before him* are as nothing;" that is, over against him, or in comparison with him. When the two are placed together, the one seems to be as nothing in the presence of the other. So the life of man, when placed by the side of the life of God, seems to be absolutely nothing. ¶ *Verily every man at his best state* is *altogether vanity.* Marg., *settled.* The idea is, that every man is *constituted* vanity. Literally, "All vanity every man is constituted." There seems to be nothing but vanity; and this is the result of a Divine constitution or arrangement. The idea expressed in our common version, "at his best state," however true in itself, is not in the original. The thoughts in the original are (*a*) that all men are vanity; that is, life is so short, and man accomplishes so little, that it seems to be perfect vanity; and (*b*) that this is the result of the Divine constitution under which man was made. It was the fact that man has been *so made* which gave so much trouble to the mind of the psalmist.

6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain show.* Marg., *an image.* The word rendered *vain show*—צֶלֶם, *tzelem*—means properly a shade, a shadow; and then, an image or likeness, as shadowing forth any real object. Then it comes to denote an idol, 2 Kings xi. 18; Amos v. 26. Here the idea seems to be that of an *image*, as contradistinguished from a *reality;* the shadow of a thing, as distinguished from the substance. Man seems to be like an image, a shadow, a phantom,—and not a real object, walking about. He is a form, an appearance, that soon vanishes away like

7 And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope *is* in thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the

a shadow. ¶ *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* That is, they are actively engaged; they bustle about; they are full of anxiety; they form plans which they execute with much toil, care, and trouble; yet for no purpose worthy of so much diligence and anxious thought. They are busy, bustling *shadows*—existing for no real or substantial purposes, and accomplishing nothing. "What shadows we are, and what shadows do we pursue," said the great orator and statesman, Edmund Burke; and what a striking and beautiful comment on the passage before us was that saying, coming from such a man, and from one occupying such a position. ¶ *He heapeth up* riches. The word here used means to heap up, to store up, as grain, Gen. xli. 35; or treasures, Job xxvii. 16; or a mound, Hab. i. 10. Here it undoubtedly refers to the efforts of men in accumulating wealth, or storing up property. This was the thing which struck the psalmist as the leading employment of these moving shadows,—a fact that would strike any one as he looks upon this busy world. ¶ *And knoweth not who shall gather them.* Who shall gather them to himself; to whom they will go when he dies. Comp. Job xxvii. 16–19; Eccles. ii. 18, 21; v. 13, 14; Luke xii. 20. The idea is, that it is not only vanity in itself, considered as the great business of life, to attempt to accumulate property,—seeing that this is not what the great object of life should be, and that a life thus spent really amounts to nothing,—but vanity in this respect also, that a man can have no absolute control over his property when he is dead, and he knows not, and cannot know, into whose hands his accumulated gains may fall. The facts on this subject; the actual distribution of property after a man is dead; the use often made of it, against which no man can guard,—should, together with other and higher motives, be a powerful consideration with every one, *not* to make the amassing of wealth the great business of life.

7. *And now,* LORD, *what wait I for?* From the consideration of a vain world,—of the fruitless efforts of man,—of what so perplexed, embarrassed, and troubled him,—the psalmist now turns to God, and looks to *him* as the source of consolation. Turning to him, he gains more cheerful views of life. The expression "What wait I for?" means, what do I now *expect* or *hope for;* on what is my hope based; where do I find any cheerful, comforting views in regard to life? He had found none in the contemplation of the world itself, in man and his pursuits; in the course of things so shadowy and so mysterious; and he says now, that he turns to God to find comfort in his perplexities. ¶ *My hope* is *in thee.* In thee alone. My reliance is on thee; my expectation is from thee. It is not from what I see in the world; it is not in my power of solving the mysteries which surround me; it is not that I can see the reason why these shadows are pursuing shadows so eagerly around me; it is in the God that made all, the ruler over all, that can control all, and that can accomplish his own great purposes in connexion even with these moving shadows, and that can confer on man thus vain in himself and in his pursuits that which will be valuable and permanent. The idea is, that the contemplation of a world so vain, so shadowy, so mysterious, should lead us away from all expectation of finding in that world what we need, or finding a solution of the questions which so much perplex us, up to the great God who is infinitely wise, and who can meet all the necessities of our immortal nature; and who, in his own time, can solve all these mysteries.

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* Recognising, as in Ps. xxxviii. 3–5, his sins as the source of

reproach of the foolish.
9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.
10 Remove thy stroke away

all his troubles and sorrows. If his transgressions were forgiven, he felt assured that his trouble would be removed. His first petition, therefore, is, that his sins might be pardoned, with the implied conscious assurance that then it would be consistent and proper for God to remove his calamity, and deliver him from the evils which had come upon him. ¶ *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* Of the wicked; of those who are foolish, *because* they are wicked. See Notes on Ps. xiv. 1. The prayer here is, that God would not suffer him to become an object of reproach to wicked and foolish men; that is, as the passage implies, that God would not so continue to treat him *as if* he were a sinner as to justify to themselves their reproaches of him as a wicked man. In other words, he prays that God would forgive his sin, and would withdraw his hand of affliction, so that even the wicked might see that he was not angry with him, but that he was an object of the Divine favour.

9. *I was dumb.* See Notes on ver. 2. Comp. Isa. liii. 7. The meaning here is, that he did not open his mouth to complain; he did not speak of God as if he had dealt unkindly or unjustly with him. ¶ *I opened not my mouth.* I kept entire silence. This would be better rendered, "I am dumb; I will not open my mouth." The meaning is, not that he had been *formerly* silent and uncomplaining, but that he was *now* silenced, or that his mind was now calm, and that he acquiesced in the dealings of Divine Providence. The state of mind here, it should be further observed, is not that which is described in ver. 2. There he represents himself as dumb, or as restraining himself from uttering what was in his mind, because he felt that it would do harm, by encouraging the wicked in their views of God and of his government; here he says that he was now silenced—he acquiesced—he had no disposition to say anything against the government of God. He was dumb, not by putting a *restraint* on himself, but because he *had* nothing to say. ¶ *Because thou didst* it. *Thou* hast done that which was so mysterious to me; that about which I was so much disposed to complain; that which has overwhelmed me with affliction and sorrow. It is now, to my mind, a sufficient reason for silencing all my murmurs, and producing entire acquiescence, that it has been done by *thee.* That fact is to me sufficient proof that it is right, and wise, and good; that fact makes my mind calm. *The best proof that anything is right and best is that it is done by God.* The most perfect calmness and peace in trouble is produced, not when we rely on our own reasonings, or when we attempt to comprehend and explain a mystery, but when we direct our thoughts simply to the fact that *God has done it.* This is the highest reason that can be presented to the human mind, that what is done is right; this raises the mind above the mysteriousness of *what* is done, and makes it plain that it *should* be done; this leaves the reasons *why* it is done, where they should be left, with God. This consideration will calm down the feelings when nothing else would do it, and dispose the mind, even under the deepest trials, to acquiescence and peace. I saw this verse engraved, with great appropriateness, on a beautiful marble monument that had been erected over a grave where lay three children that had been suddenly cut down by the scarlet fever. What could be more suitable in such a trial than such a text? What could more strikingly express the true feelings of Christian piety—the calm submission of redeemed souls—than the disposition of parents, thus bereaved, to record such a sentiment over the grave of their children?

10. *Remove thy stroke away from*

from me: I am consumed by the [1] blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest [2] his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a

[1] *conflict.*

[2] *that which is to be desired in him to melt away.*

me. And yet this calm submission, as expressed in ver. 9, does not take away the *desire* that the hand of God may be removed, and that the suffering that is brought upon us may cease. Perfect submission is not inconsistent with the prayer that, if it be the will of God, the calamity may be removed: Luke xxii. 42. On the word here rendered *stroke* — נֶגַע, *naiga* — see Notes on Ps. xxxviii. 11. It is equivalent here to chastisement, or judgment. It refers to the trial which he was then enduring, whatever it was, which had given occasion to the feelings that he says (ver. 1, 2) he had felt bound to suppress when in the presence of the wicked, but in reference to which he had learned entirely to acquiesce (ver. 9). From that trial itself he now prays that he may be delivered. ¶ *I am consumed.* I am wasting away. I cannot long bear up under it. I must sink down to the grave if it is not removed. See ver. 13. ¶ *By the blow of thine hand.* Marg., as in Heb., *conflict.* That is, the blow which God brings on any one when he has, as it were, a *strife* or a *conflict* with him. It is designed here to express his affliction, as if God had *struck* him.

11. *When thou with rebukes.* The word here rendered *rebukes* means properly (*a*) proof or demonstration; (*b*) confutation or contradiction; (*c*) reproof or admonition by words; (*d*) reproof by correction or punishment. This is the meaning here. The idea of the psalmist is, that God, by punishment or calamity, expresses his sense of the evil of human conduct; and that, under such an expression of it, man, being unable to sustain it, melts away or is destroyed. ¶ *Dost correct man for iniquity.* Dost punish man for his sin; or dost express thy sense of the evil of sin by the calamities which are brought upon him. ¶ *Thou makest his beauty.* Marg., *That which is to be desired in him.* The Hebrew means *desired, delighted in;* then, something desirable, pleasant; a delight. Its meaning is not confined to *beauty.* It refers to *anything* that is to man an object of desire or delight,—strength, beauty, possessions, life itself. All are made to fade away before the expressions of the Divine displeasure. ¶ *To consume away like a moth.* Not as a moth is consumed, but as a moth consumes or destroys valuable objects, such as clothing. See Notes on Job iv. 19. The beauty, the vigour, the strength of man is marred and destroyed, as the texture of cloth is by the moth. ¶ *Surely every man* is *vanity.* That is, he is seen to be vanity—to have no strength, no permanency—by the ease with which God takes away all on which he had prided himself. See Notes on ver. 5.

12. *Hear my prayer, O* LORD, *and give ear unto my cry.* That is, in view of my affliction and my sins; in view, also, of the perplexing questions which have agitated my bosom; the troublous thoughts which passed through my soul, which I did not dare to express before man (vers. 1, 2), but which I have now expressed before thee. ¶ *Hold not thy peace.* Be not silent. Do not refuse to answer me; to speak peace to me. ¶ *At my tears.* Or rather, at my weeping; as if God heard the voice of his weeping. Weeping, if unmurmuring, is of the nature of prayer, for God regards the sorrows of the soul as he sees them. The weeping penitent, the weeping sufferer, is one on whom we may suppose God looks with

sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

compassion, even though the sorrows of the soul do not find *words* to give utterance to them. Comp. Notes on Job xvi. 20. See also Rom. viii. 26. ¶ *For I* am *a stranger.* The word used — גֵּר, *gair* — means properly a sojourner; a foreigner; a man living out of his own country: Gen. xv. 13; Ex. ii. 22. It refers to a man who has no permanent home in the place or country where he now is; and it is used here as implying that, in the estimation of the psalmist himself, he had no permanent abode on earth. He was in a strange or foreign land. He was passing *to* a permanent home; and he prays that God would be merciful to him as to a man who *has* no home—no permanent abiding place — on earth. Comp. Notes on Heb. xi. 13; 1 Peter ii. 11. ¶ And *a sojourner.* This word has substantially the same signification. It denotes one living in another country, without the rights of a citizen. ¶ *As all my fathers* were. All my ancestors. The allusion is doubtless derived from the fact that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thus lived as men who had no permanent home here,—who had no possession of soil in the countries where they sojourned,—and whose whole life, therefore, was an illustration of the fact that they were *on a journey*—a journey to another world. 1 Chron. xxix. 15,—"For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." Comp. Notes on Heb. xi. 13–15.

13. *O spare me.* The word here used—from שָׁעָה, *shaah* — means *to look;* and then, in connexion with the preposition, *to look away from;* and it here means, *Look away from me;* that is, Do not come to inflict death on me. Preserve me. The idea is this: God seemed to have fixed his eyes on him, and to be pursuing him with the expressions of his displeasure (comp. Job xvi. 9); and the psalmist now prays that he would *turn away his eyes,* and leave him. ¶ *That I may recover strength.* The word here used — בָּלַג, *balag* — means, in Arabic, to be bright; to shine forth; and then, to make cheerful, to enliven one's countenance, or to be joyful, glad. In Job ix. 27, it is rendered *comfort;* in Job x. 20, that I *may take comfort;* in Amos v. 9, *strengtheneth.* It is not used elsewhere. The idea is that of being *cheered up;* of being strengthened and invigorated before he should pass away. He wished to be permitted to recover the strength which he had lost, and especially to receive consolation, before he should leave the earth. He desired that his closing days might not be under a cloud, but that he might obtain brighter and more cheerful views, and have more of the consolations of religion before he should be removed finally from this world. It is a wish not to leave the world in gloom, or with gloomy and desponding views, but with a cheerful view of the past; with joyful confidence in the government of God; and with bright anticipations of the coming world. ¶ *Before I go hence.* Before I die. ¶ *And be no more.* Be no more upon the earth. Comp. Notes on Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9. See also Notes on Job xiv. 1–12. Whatever may have been his views of the future world, he desired to be cheered and comforted in the prospect of passing away finally from earth. He was unwilling to go down to the grave in gloom, or under the influence of the dark and distressing views which he had experienced, and to which he refers in this psalm. A religious man, about to leave the world, should *desire* to have bright hopes and anticipations. For his own comfort and peace, for the honour of religion, for the glory of God, he should not leave those around under the impression that religion does no-

thing to comfort a dying man, or to inspire with hope the mind of one about to leave the earth, or to give to the departing friend of God cheerful anticipations of the life to come. A joyful confidence in God and his government, when a man is about to leave the world, does much, very much, to impress the minds of others with a conviction of the truth and reality of religion, as dark and gloomy views can hardly fail to lead the world to ask what that religion is worth which will not inspire a dying man with hope, and make him calm in the closing scene.

PSALM XL.

This psalm, which purports to have been composed by David, is another of the psalms addressed or dedicated "to the chief Musician;" that is, which he is desired to adjust to the appropriate music; and it is, therefore, probably one that was particularly intended to be employed in the public worship of the Hebrews. On the meaning of this expression, see Notes to the inscription of Ps. iv.

There is no method of ascertaining with certainty on what occasion the psalm was composed. Doubtless it was in view of some of the trials which occurred in the life of David, since there were many of these to which the sentiments of the psalm may with propriety be applied. As it is impossible now, however, from anything in the psalm itself, to ascertain *which* of those afflictions were here referred to, or which suggested the psalm, conjecture would be useless; nor, if we could ascertain to what particular time of his life he made reference, would it furnish any material aid in interpreting the psalm. It is to be presumed, however, that there was a reference to *some* trouble or calamity in his own life; and even if it be supposed that the psalm was designed to refer wholly to the Messiah, and to be descriptive of *his* sufferings, still it is probable that the language employed was *suggested* by something in the life of the author of the psalm, and that he was led to contemplate the future sufferings of the Messiah in connexion with his own trials.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

(1.) A reference to some time of calamity or deep sorrow, represented by being in a horrible pit, from which he had been delivered in answer to prayer,—a deliverance so remarkable that the effect would be to lead many, on account of it, to praise God, vers. 1-3.

(2.) A statement of the blessedness of the man that made the Lord his trust, and put confidence in *him* rather than in the proud of the earth, or in those who were faithless or deceitful, ver. 4.

(3.) A grateful remembrance of the many works of the Lord;—evidently as laying the foundation of obligation to serve him in every way possible, and as a *reason* of the purpose of obedience immediately referred to, ver. 5.

(4.) A statement of what *he* had done, or what he proposed to do, as expressive of his sense of obligation, or of the service which God required of him, vers. 6-10. The speaker in the psalm says that God did not require of him sacrifice and offering—that is, the bloody sacrifices prescribed in the Hebrew ritual, ver. 6; that God had disposed him to obey, or had prepared him to render such obedience as was required—("Mine ears hast thou opened"), ver. 6; that he came to obey, in accordance with some prediction or previous record in regard to him, ver. 7; that he found his supreme pleasure in doing the will of God, ver. 8; and that, in pursuance of this arrangement and of this purpose, he had made known the will of God—had preached righteousness in the great congregation, and had faithfully declared the salvation of God, vers. 9, 10.

(5.) Prayers and supplications founded on these facts—on his trials; on his dangers; on the attempts of his enemies to destroy him; on his desire for the welfare and safety of the people of God, vers. 11-17. Particularly (*a*) prayer for his own deliverance from the troubles which encompassed him still, vers. 11-13; (*b*) prayer that those who were opposed to him might be abased and humbled, vers. 14, 15; (*c*) prayer that those who sought the Lord might rejoice and be glad, ver. 16; and (*d*) a prayer for himself, as poor and needy, on the grounds that God was his help and his deliverer, ver. 17.

A very important and difficult question occurs here. It is the question to whom the psalm originally referred.

On this question there have been the following opinions: (1) That it refers originally and exclusively to David; (2) that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah; (3) that it is

susceptible of a *double* application, part of the psalm having reference to David, and the other portion to the Messiah, as having been *suggested* by his own circumstances; and (4) that the portion of the psalm applied to the Messiah in Heb. x. 5-9 is applied by way of *accommodation*, or as expressing the meaning of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, but without affirming on the part of the writer of that epistle that the psalm had originally any Messianic reference.

It would be too long to examine these opinions in detail; and all that is needful in this brief introduction to the psalm may be to state some reasons for what seems to me to be the true opinion, that the psalm had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, or that it is one of the compositions in the Old Testament, like Ps. ii., xxii., and Is. liii., which were designed by the Spirit of inspiration to describe the Messiah, as to some of his characteristics, and as to what he would suffer.

(1) There *are* such psalms, such portions of the Old Testament. This is admitted by all who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Messiah was the hope of the Jewish people. He was the subject of their most sublime prophecies. The nation was accustomed to look forward to him as their great Deliverer. In all times of national calamity they looked forward to the period when *he* would appear for their rescue. He was, so to speak, the "*hero*" of their national literature; the bright object in the future to which all the sacred writers looked forward; the glorious Saviour and Deliverer whose coming, and the anticipated benefit of whose coming, animated their lays, and cheered them in the darkest days of trouble and sorrow. Comp. Introd. to Isaiah, § 7.

(2) The author of the epistle to the Hebrews expressly applies a part of this psalm to the Messiah, Heb. x. 5-9. There can be no reasonable doubt that he quoted this with the belief that the psalm had original reference to him, and that he did not use the language by way of accommodation, for he was endeavouring to demonstrate a *point*, or to *prove* that what he was stating was true. This he does by referring to the passage in the psalm *as proof on the point then under consideration*. But there would have been no proof—no argument—in the case, if he had merely quoted language by way of accommodation, which had originally a different design. The very point of his quotation is based on the fact that he was adducing a passage which had original reference to the Messiah, and which might be *properly* quoted as characterizing his work. The proof (as derived from this fact) that the psalm had reference to the Messiah, consists of two things:—(*a*) That it is so applied by an inspired apostle, which, with all who admit his inspiration would seem to be decisive of the question; (*b*) that he so applied it, shews, in the circumstances, that this was an ancient and admitted interpretation. He was writing to those who had been Jews; to those whom he was desirous of convincing as to the truth of what he was alleging in regard to the notion of Hebrew sacrifices. For this purpose it was necessary to appeal to the Old Testament; but it cannot be supposed that he would adduce, as proof, a passage whose relevancy to the point would not be at once admitted. It may be presumed, therefore, that the passage was commonly applied by the Hebrews themselves to the purpose for which the apostle used it, or that the application, when made, was so plain and obvious that they would not call it in question.

(3) The entire psalm may be applied to the Messiah without anything forced or unnatural in the interpretation. This will be shewn, in detail, in the exposition of the psalm; but in the meantime it may not be improper to refer to the principal difficulties in such an application, and to the principal objections derived from this source against the idea that the psalm refers to the Messiah. The principal of these relate to the following points:—(*a*) In ver. 2 the speaker in the psalm says: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings;" and on the ground of this, he gives thanks to God. But there is no real difficulty in supposing that this refers to the Messiah, and that it was actually fulfilled in the case of the Lord Jesus. His enemies often plotted against his life; they laid snares for him; they endeavoured to destroy him; his dangers may well be represented as "an horrible pit," and as "miry clay;" and his deliverance from those perils may well be compared with the case of one who is raised up from such a pit, and from the deep mire. Even supposing that this was designed to refer to the

personal experience of the psalmist himself, still the language would be figurative, and must be designed to refer to some danger, peril, or trouble that would be well represented by being thrown into such a pit, or sinking in miry clay. It cannot be supposed that the psalmist meant to say this had really and literally occurred in his own life. Without any impropriety, therefore, the language may be applied to the trials and dangers of the Messiah, and to the merciful interposition of God in delivering him. (*b*) The second objection or difficulty in referring it to the Messiah is derived from what is said in ver. 12: "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." But, in reference to the propriety of applying this to the Messiah, two remarks may be made: *First.* It may be true that the Messiah was so identified with men—became so truly a substitute for sinners—experienced in his own soul, in the deep sorrows of the atonement, so intensely the effects of their *sin*,—and so bore the sufferings that were expressive of the Divine sense of the evil of sin, that the language might be applied to him *as if* these sins were his own. He was treated *as if* they were his—as if he had been a sinner. He so made them his own, that it was proper he should be treated *as if* they were his, and that he might feel he was suffering *as if* they were his. It is true that they could not be literally transferred to him; it is true that in no proper sense of the term was he a sinner; it is true that in the just signification of the word he was *not* "guilty," and that God always saw he was personally innocent; but still it is true that, in the work of the atonement, he was treated *as if* he had been a sinner, and that, in this sense, he might speak of the sins for which he suffered as his own. He had voluntarily assumed them, and he was suffering for them *as if* they had been his. Thus we have in Isa. liii. 4–6 similar language applied to him: "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If such language might properly be applied to him and his sufferings, then there could be no impropriety or incongruity in his regarding himself as so identified with sinful men, and as so truly bearing what was due to their sins, that he might speak of those sins *as if* they were his own, as one might speak of a debt incurred by a friend, and which he had brought himself under voluntary obligation to pay, *as if* it were his own, and might say, "it is no longer *his*, but *mine*." The language of Scripture in regard to the relation of the Redeemer to sin is often so marked and striking as to suggest and to justify this language. See 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13. *Second.* It is possible, after all, that the word rendered *iniquities* in the psalm, means here merely *calamity, trouble, sorrow.* (See Notes on Heb. x. 5; and comp. Prof. Stuart on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Excursus xx., p. 594.) So the same word which is here used means, in 2 Sam. xvi. 12, "It may be that the Lord will look on mine *affliction*." The words *iniquity* and *calamity*—*sin* and *punishment*—are closely connected in the Scriptures; so closely that the one is often put for the other, and when a sacred writer speaks of his *sin*, he often means the suffering or calamity that has come upon him in consequence of his sin. So the Messiah may be understood here to mean that the calamities or woes which had come upon him in consequence of his taking upon him the sins of the world made it proper to say that his "iniquities"—the iniquities which he had assumed, or which, in the language of Isaiah, he "bore"—had "taken hold on him, so that he was not able to look up;" or, considering their great number, he might say, "they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." (*c*) A third objection to the application of the psalm to the Messiah is, that it cannot be supposed he would utter such imprecations on his enemies as are found in vers. 14, 15: "Let them be ashamed and confounded; let them be driven backward; let them be desolate." To this it may be replied, that such imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as in the mouth of David; and that they are *improper* in neither. Both David and the Messiah *did* utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God. There is no evidence that there was any *malignant* feeling in either case; nor is it inconsistent with the highest benevolence to utter denunciation of guilt. God constantly does it in his word; and he as often does it in the dealings of his Providence. The wicked cannot walk

PSALM XL.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

I [1] WAITED patiently for the LORD: and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

[1] *In waiting I waited.*

through this world without meeting denunciations of their guilt on every hand, and there was no impiety in the fact that he who will pronounce a sentence in the great day of judgment on all guilty men, should apprize them beforehand of what would be sure to come upon them. The objections, then, are not of such a nature that it is improper to regard the psalm as wholly applicable to the Messiah.

(4) The psalm cannot be applied with propriety to David, nor do we know of any one to whom it can be applied but the Messiah. It was not true of David that he "had come to do the will" of God, in view of the fact that God did not require sacrifice and offerings, vers. 6, 7; it was not true that it was written of him "in the volume of the book," that he delighted to do the will of God, and that he had come into the world in view of the fact that it *had been* so written (vers. 7, 8); it was not true that it had been his characteristic work to "preach righteousness in the great congregation" (ver. 9); but all this *was* true of the Messiah. These expressions are such as can be applied only to him; and, taking all these circumstances together, the conclusion seems to be a proper one that the whole psalm had original reference to the Redeemer, and is to be interpreted as appplying to him alone.

There is a remarkable resemblance between the close of this psalm (vers. 13–17) and Ps. lxx. Indeed, that entire psalm is the same as the closing part of this one. Why that portion of the psalm before us is thus repeated, and why it is separated from this and made a psalm by itself, is wholly unknown. It cannot be supposed to be an error in transcribing, for the error would be too material, and would most certainly be detected. Perhaps it can best be accounted for by supposing the author of Ps. lxx. to have been in the state of mind, and in the circumstances there described, and by supposing that instead of writing a *new* psalm which would express his feelings, he found that this part of Ps. xl., already composed, would describe so exactly what he wished to express, and that he regarded it as so adapted to be a prayer by itself, that he therefore copied it. The fact that it was thus copied, and that the sentiments were repeated, does not in any manner detract from the supposition that it is inspired.

1. *I waited patiently for the* LORD. Marg., as in Heb., *In waiting I waited.* That is, *I continued to wait.* It was not a single, momentary act of expectation or hope; it was continuous; or, was persevered in. The idea is, that his prayer was not answered at once, but that it was answered after he had made repeated prayers, or when it seemed as if his prayers would not be answered. It is earnest, persevering prayer that is referred to; it is continued supplication and hope when there seemed to be no answer to prayer, and no prospect that it would be answered. ¶ *And he inclined unto me.* That is, ultimately he heard and answered me; or he turned himself favourably towards me, as the result of *persevering* prayer. The word "inclined" here means properly *bowed;* that is, he *bent forward* to hearken, or to place his ear near my mouth and to hear me. At first he seemed as one that would not hear; as one that throws his head backward or turns his head away. Ultimately, however, he bent forward to receive my prayer. ¶ *And heard my cry.* The cry or supplication which I made for help; the cry which I directed to him in the depth of my sorrows and my danger, ver. 2. As applied to the Redeemer, this would refer to the fact that in his sorrows, in the deep sorrows connected with the work of redemption, he persevered in calling on God, and that God heard him, and raised him up to glory and joy. See Matt. xxvi. 36–46. Comp. Notes on Heb. v. 7. The time supposed to be referred to, is *after* his sufferings were closed; *after* his work was done; *after* he rose from the dead. It is the language of grateful remembrance which we may suppose he uttered in the review of the amazing sorrows

2 He brought me up also out of [1] an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.

[1] *a pit of noise.*

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

through which he had passed in making the atonement, and in the recollection that God had kept him in those sorrows, and had brought him up from such a depth of woe to such a height of glory.

2. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit.* Marg., *A pit of noise.* The word here used means a pit; a cistern; a prison; a dungeon; a grave. This last signification of the word is found in Ps. xxviii. 1; xxx. 4; lxxxviii. 4; Isa. xxxviii. 18; xiv. 19. It may refer to any calamity—or to trouble, like being *in* a pit,—or it may refer to the grave. The word rendered *horrible*—שְׁאוֹן, *shâon*—means properly *noise, uproar, tumult,* as of waters; of a crowd of men; of war. Then it seems to be used in the sense of *desolation* or *destruction,* as applicable to the grave. De Wette understands it here of a pit, a cavern, or an abyss that roars or is tumultuous; that is, that is impassable. Perhaps this is the idea,—a cavern, deep and dark, where the waters roar, and which seems to be filled with horrors. So Rosenmüller understands it. The LXX. render it ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας, *a lake of misery.* It is a deep and horrid cavern, where there is no hope of being rescued, or where it would seem that there would be certain destruction. ¶ *Out of the miry clay.* At the bottom of the pit. Where there was no solid ground—no rock on which to stand. See Jer. xxxviii. 6; Ps. lxix. 2, 14. ¶ *And set my feet upon a rock.* Where there was firm standing. ¶ And *established my goings.* Or, fixed my steps. That is, he enabled me to walk as on solid ground; he conducted me along safely, where there was no danger of descending to the pit again or of sinking in the mire. If we understand this of the Redeemer, it refers to that time when, his sorrows ended, and his work of atonement done, it became certain that he would never be exposed again to such dangers, or sink into such a depth of woes, but that his course ever onward would be one of safety and of glory.

3. *And he hath put a new song in my mouth.* See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 3. The idea is, that he had given a new or fresh *occasion* for praise. The deliverance was so marked, and was such an addition to former mercies, that a new expression of thanks was proper. It was an act of such surprising intervention on the part of God that the language used on former occasions, and which was adapted to express the mercies then received, would not be sufficient to convey the sense of gratitude felt for the present deliverance. As applied to the Messiah, and referring (as it was supposed in the Notes on ver. 2) to his being raised up to glory after the depth of his sorrows, it would mean that *no* language hitherto employed to express gratitude to God would be adequate to the occasion, but that the language of a *new* song of praise would be demanded to celebrate so great an event. ¶ Even *praise unto our God.* "To *our* God;"—identifying himself, as the Messiah does, with his people, and expressing the idea that the new song of praise was appropriate to them as well as to *himself,*—since they would be benefited by his work, and since God was their God as well as his. Comp. John xx. 17. ¶ *Many shall see* it. Great numbers of the human race shall be made acquainted with the occasion which there was for such a song. ¶ *And fear.* Learn to reverence, to worship, to honour God, as the result of what had been done. ¶ *And shall trust in the* LORD. Shall confide in God; shall put their trust in him; shall become his true worshippers and

4 Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth [z] not the proud, nor such as [a] turn aside to lies.

5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy [b] wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and [c] thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.

[z] Ps. xv. 4. [a] Ps. cxxv. 5.
[b] Job ix. 10.
[c] Jer. xxix. 11.
[1] Or, *none can order them unto thee.*

friends;—(*a*) as the effect of this merciful interposition in behalf of him who had been thus in trouble or distress, and who was enabled to triumph; (*b*) as the result of the work accomplished by him. The effect of the Redeemer's sorrows, and of God's merciful help, would be that great numbers would learn to put their trust in God, or would become his true friends. No man, in fact, can compute the *numbers* of those who, in consequence of the work of the Messiah, will turn to God and become his true worshippers and friends.

4. *Blessed* is *that man that maketh the* LORD *his trust.* See Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 8. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 1. Literally here, "The blessings of the man who places Jehovah for his confidence;" that is, who makes Him his *security*, or who feels that his security for happiness and salvation is in Him. ¶ *And respecteth not the proud.* The haughty, or those who are confident in themselves. Literally, "who *looks* not to the proud;" that is, who does not depend on them for help and for salvation. ¶ *Nor such as turn aside to lies.* Who depart from the straight path, and incline to that which is false and deceitful. The reference is to those who are easily made to swerve from that which is true and honest to that which is delusive and false. Their integrity cannot be confided in. There is no security that they will be disposed to do right. The *idea* is, that the man who trusts in God is blessed or happy, as compared with one who trusts in *man*;—man confident in himself; man liable to fall into error; man who is easily led astray; man who is deceitful, and who cannot, therefore, be relied on. God is mighty, but not haughty; God never is drawn aside from the truth; he never deceives.

5. *Many, O* LORD *my God*, are *thy wonderful works* which *thou hast done.* Literally, "Many [things], O Lord my God, hast thou done; thy wonderful things and thy thoughts towards us, it is not [possible] to state unto thee." The recollection of the particular kindness shown to the speaker, as referred to in the previous verses, suggests the recollection of the *great number* of wonders that God had done for his people,—the acts of his kindness which it would be hopeless to attempt to recount before him. And who *could* enumerate and record all the acts of God's benevolence towards men in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; all that he has done in the history of the Church, and for the individual members of the Church in past times; all that he has done to save his people in the days of persecution; all that has been accomplished in our own individual lives? Obviously these things are beyond all power of enumeration by man. They can be admired now only in the gross; eternity alone will be sufficient for us to look at them and to recount them in detail. The phrase "wonderful works" means here remarkable interventions; things fitted to excite astonishment; things that surpass what man could have anticipated; things that could have been done only by God. ¶ *And thy thoughts* which are *to us-ward.* Toward us; or which pertain to us. The word "thoughts" here refers to the plans, purposes, arrangements of God designed for our welfare; the things that are the result of his *thinking* of our wants—of what we need—of what would do us good. See ver.

6 Sacrifice [d] and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou [1] opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.

[d] Ps. li. 16; Heb. x. 4—10.
[1] *digged*, Ex. xxi. 6.

17. ¶ *They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee.* Marg., *None can order them unto thee.* Literally, "There is no putting them in order before thee;" that is, there is no such arranging of them, or disposing of them in order, that they can all be brought into their proper place, so as to be perceived or numbered. The Hebrew word—עָרַךְ, *arach*—means properly, to place in a row; to put in order; to arrange; as, to put an army in battle array, or to draw it up for battle, Judges xx. 20, 22; to put words in order for an argument, or to arrange thoughts so as to present an argument, Job xxxii. 14; to set a cause in order before a judge, or to lay it before him, Job xiii. 18. The word also means to place together with anything, or by the side of anything,—that is, to make a comparison. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes that this is the idea here, and that the proper interpretation is, *Nothing can be compared unto thee.* But the other interpretation seems best to accord with the connexion, as referring to the wonderful works of God, and to his thoughts of mercy and goodness as being beyond the power of computation, or as too numerous to be brought into order and arrangement before the mind. ¶ If *I would declare and speak* of them. If I should attempt to speak of them; or to recount them. ¶ *They are more than can be numbered.* More than man can enumerate. They go beyond the power of language to express them. This is literally true. No language of man can describe what God has *done* and has *purposed* in fitting up this world as an abode for men, and in his mercy towards them

6. *Sacrifice and offering.* The first of the words here used—זֶבַח, *zebahh*—means properly a bloody-offering; the other—מִנְחָה, *minhhah*—an offering without blood, as a thank-offering. See Notes on Isa. i. 11. The four words employed in this verse—sacrifice, offering, burnt-offering, sin-offering—embrace all the species of sacrifice and offerings known among the Hebrews; and the idea here is, that no such offering as they were accustomed to offer was required of him who is here referred to. A higher service was needed. ¶ *Thou didst not desire.* The word here rendered *desire* means to incline to, to be favourably disposed, as in reference to doing anything; that is, to will, to desire, to please. The meaning here is, that he did not will this or wish it; he would not be pleased with it in comparison with obedience, or as a substitute for obedience. He preferred obedience to any external rites and forms; to all the rites and forms of religion prescribed by the law. They were of no value without obedience; they could not be substituted in the place of obedience. This sentiment often occurs in the Old Testament, showing that the design of all the rites then prescribed was to bring men *to* obedience, and that they were of no value without obedience. See Notes on Isa. i. 10—20; comp. 1 Sam. xv. 22; Ps. li. 16, 17; Hos. vi. 6; see also Notes on Heb. x. 5. ¶ *Mine ears hast thou opened.* Marg., *digged.* The Hebrew word—כָּרָה, *karah*—means *to dig;* as, to dig a well, Gen. xxvi. 25; to dig a sepulchre, Gen. l. 5. As used here this would properly mean, *mine ears hast thou digged out;* that is, thou hast so opened them that there is a communication with the seat of hearing; or, in other words, thou hast caused me to hear this truth, or hast revealed it to me. Comp. Isa. l. 5, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." The meaning here would be, that the ear had been opened, so that it was quick to hear. An indisposition to obey the will of God is

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in
e the volume of the book *it is* written of me,

e Luke xxiv. 44; John v. 39.

often expressed by the fact that the ears are *stopped:* Zech. vii. 11; Ps. lviii. 4, 5; Prov. xxi. 13. There is manifestly no allusion here, though that has been supposed by many to be the reference, to the custom of boring through the ear of a servant with an awl, as a sign that he was willing to remain with his master: Exod. xxi. 6; Deut. xv. 17. In that case the outer circle, or rim of the ear was *bored through* with an awl; here the idea is that of *hollowing out*, digging, excavating, that is, of making a passage *through*, so that one could hear; not the mere piercing of the outer ear. The essential idea is, that this truth had been communicated to him —that God preferred obedience to sacrifice; and that he had been made attentive to that truth, *as if* he had been before deaf, and his ears had been opened. The principal difficulty in the passage relates to its application in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. x. 5. That difficulty arises from the fact that the Septuagint translates the phrase here by the words "a body hast thou prepared me;" and that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews founds an argument *on* that translation, with reference to the work of the Messiah. On this point, see the Notes on Heb. x. 5. It is perhaps not now possible to explain this difficulty in a way that will be entirely satisfactory. ¶ *Burnt-offering.* See Notes on Isa. i. 11. The peculiarity of this offering was that it was consumed by fire. ¶ *And sin-offering.* Sin-offering was an offering or sacrifice made specifically for *sin*, with a view to expiate either sin in general, or some specific act of sin. In the Mosaic law there are two kinds of these offerings prescribed;—*trespass-offerings*, or offerings for guilt or fault, denoted by the word אָשָׁם, *asham;* and sin-offering, denoted by the word used here. They are offerings which were consumed by fire, Lev. v. 1—19; vi. 1—7; xiv. 10. But the essential *idea* was that they were for *sin*, or for some act of guilt. In a general sense, this was true of all bloody offerings or sacrifices; but in these cases the attention of the worshipper was turned particularly to the fact of *sin* or transgression. ¶ *Thou hast not required.* That is, thou hast not required them as compared with obedience; in other words, thou hast preferred the latter. These offerings would not meet the case. More was necessary to be done than was implied in these sacrifices. They would not expiate sin; they would not remove guilt; they would not give the conscience peace. A higher work, a work implied in an act of *obedience* of the most exalted kind, was demanded in order to accomplish the work to be done. Comp. Ps. li. 16.

7. *Then said I.* In Heb. x. 7, the apostle applies this to the Messiah. See Notes on that verse. This is the most simple and satisfactory interpretation of the passage. The word "then" in this verse means, "since this is the case;" or, "things being thus." It does not refer to *time*, but to the condition of things. "Since it was certain that the work needful to be done could not be accomplished by bloody offerings—the sacrifice of animals,—under these circumstances I said;" that is, I resolved or purposed to come. ¶ *Lo, I come.* It is difficult to see how this could be applied to David; it is easy to see how it could be applied to the Messiah. When all bloody offerings under the law — all the sacrifices which men could make — did not avail to put away sin, it was true of the Messiah that he came into the world to perform a higher work that *would* meet the case—a lofty work of obedience, extending even unto death, Phil. ii. 8. This is precisely the use which the apostle makes of the passage in Heb. x. 7, and this is clearly the most obvious meaning. It is in no sense applicable to David; it is fully applicable to the Messiah. ¶ *In the*

§ I *f* delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* [1] within my heart.

f John iv. 34.
[1] *in the midst of my bowels.*

volume of the book. Literally, "in the *roll* of the book." See Notes on Luke iv. 17. The phrase would most naturally denote the *roll of the law;* but it might include *any* volume or roll where a record or prophecy was made. In a large sense it would embrace *all* that had been written at the command of God at the time when this was supposed to be spoken. That is, as spoken by the Messiah, it would include all the books of the Old Testament. See Notes on Heb. x. 7. ¶ It is *written of me.* It is recorded; or, there is a record made of *me;* to wit, in this respect, that his great delight would be to do the will of God. The proper interpretation of this expression must be, that there must be some record to be found in the "book" or "volume" referred to, which was *designed* to describe *him* in this respect, or which had an original reference to him. The meaning is not that there was a *general* record on the point of obedience which *might* be applied to him as well as to others, but that the record was *intended* to be applied to him, and to describe his character. This is one of the passages in the Psalms which cannot with any propriety be applied to David himself. There was no such antecedent record in regard to him; no statement in any "book" or "volume" that this would be his character. There is no promise — no intimation—in any of the books of Scripture written before the time of David that *he* would come to do the will of God with a view to effect that which could not be done by the sacrifices and offerings under the law. The reference of the language, therefore, must be to the Messiah—to some place where it is represented or affirmed that he would come to accomplish by his obedience what could not be done by the sacrifices and oblations made under the law. Thus understood, and regarded as the language of the Messiah himself, the reference might be to all the books of the Old Testament (for all were completed before he came), and not merely to those which had been written in the time of David. But still, it is true that no such declaration, in so many words, can now be found in any of those books; and the meaning must be that this was the language which was everywhere *implied* respecting the Messiah; that this was the substance of the description given of him; that this characterised his work as predicted there; — to wit, that when all sacrifices and offerings under the law failed; when they had all shown that they were not efficacious to put away sin, One would come to perform some higher work that *would* be effectual in putting away transgression, and that this work might, in the highest sense, be described as "obedience," or as "doing the will of God." This was true. The language and the institutions of the Old Testament contemplated him as the One who only could put away sin. The entire spirit of the Mosaic economy supposed that a Saviour would come to do the will of God by making an atonement for the sin of the world. The meaning then is, "I come to do thy will in making an atonement, for no other offering would expiate sin; that I would do this, is the language of the Scriptures in predicting my coming, and of the whole spirit and design of the ancient dispensation."

8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God.* To wit, in obeying the law; in submitting to all the trials appointed to me; in making an atonement for the sins of men. See Notes on Heb. x. 7. Comp. Phil. ii. 8; Matt. xxvi. 39. ¶ *Yea, thy law* is *within my heart.* Marg., *In the midst of my bowels.* So the Hebrew. The idea is, that the law of God was *within* him. His obedience was not exter-

9 I have preached [g] righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

10 I have not hid [h] thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth [i] continually preserve me.

[g] Luke iv. 16—22.
[h] Acts xx. 20, 27.
[i] Ps. lxxxv. 10.

nal, but proceeded from the heart. How true this was of the Redeemer it is not necessary here to say.

9. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.* I have maintained and defended the principles of righteousness and truth among assembled multitudes. It would be difficult to see how *this* could be applied to David himself, or on what occasion of his life this could be said of him; but no one can doubt that this is applicable to the Messiah. (*a*) He *was* a preacher. (*b*) He addressed vast multitudes. (*c*) Before them all, and at all times, he maintained and illustrated the great principles of "righteousness" as demanded by the law of God, and unfolded the way in which all those multitudes might become "righteous" before God. ¶ *Lo, I have not refrained my lips.* I have not closed my lips. I have not kept back the truth. ¶ *O* LORD, *thou knowest.* He could make this solemn appeal to God as the searcher of hearts, in proof that he had faithfully uttered all that had been required of him in making known the will of God. Comp. John xvii. 4, 6, 8, 14, 26.

10. *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.* The word *righteousness* here may denote the Divine *views* on the subject of righteousness, or *the Divine method of making man righteous;* that is, the method of justification, as the word is used in the New Testament. See Notes on Rom. i. 17. The word, as it might have been employed by David, would have been used in the former sense, as meaning that, knowing what God *requires* of men, he had not concealed that in his heart, or had not kept it to himself; as used by the Messiah, as I suppose it to be here, it would be employed in the latter sense, or perhaps embrace both. The idea would be, that he had not concealed in his own mind, or had not kept to himself, the knowledge which he had of the requirements of the law of God, or of the way in which man can be justified or regarded and treated as righteous in his sight. He had fully communicated this knowledge to others. It is not necessary to say that this was literally fulfilled in the work of the Redeemer. He spent his life in making known the great truths about the righteousness of God; he died that he might disclose to man a way by which God could consistently regard and treat men as righteous. See Notes on Rom. iii. 24–26. ¶ *I have declared thy faithfulness.* Thy truthfulness; I have showed that God is worthy of confidence. ¶ *And thy salvation.* Thy method of salvation, or of saving men. ¶ *I have not concealed thy loving-kindness.* Thy mercy or thy merciful disposition towards men. He had shown to the human race that God was a merciful Being; a Being who would pardon sin. ¶ *And thy truth.* The truth which thou hast revealed; the truth on all subjects which it was important for men to understand. ¶ *From the great congregation.* That is, as in ver. 9, the assembled multitudes—the throngs that gathered to hear the words of the Great Teacher. Comp. Matt. v. 1; xiii. 2; Luke viii. 4.

11. *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O* LORD. Do not restrain or hold back thy compassions. Let thy mercies—the expressions of thy love—flow out freely

12 For innumerable [k] evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities [l] have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart [1] faileth me.

[k] Heb. iv. 15. [l] Ps. xxxviii. 4, etc.

[1] *forsaketh.*

towards me in connexion with what I have done. As applicable to the Redeemer, this is a prayer that God would bestow upon him in connexion with his work, and as a reward of his work, appropriate proofs of his goodness. And especially is this to be understood here as a prayer for support and deliverance in the sorrows that came upon him in the accomplishment of his work. The prayer is *intermediate* between the expression of his purpose to do the will of God when all other means of salvation had failed (vers. 6–8), and the sorrows or sufferings that *would* come upon him in the accomplishment of his work (vers. 12, 13). He saw himself at this point of his life, as represented in the psalm, as about to sink into the depth of woes. He had kept the law of God, and had by his obedience thus far done his will. He had made known the truth of God, and had declared his great message to the assembled multitude that had crowded his path, and thronged to hear him. He saw himself now about to enter the vale of sorrow; to plunge into that depth of the unutterable woes connected with the making of an atonement. He prayed, therefore, that, in these approaching sorrows, God would *not* withhold the expression of his tender mercy. The point of time, therefore, in the Redeemer's life which the verse before us occupies, is that awful and sorrowful hour when, his public work of teaching and of miracles finished, he was about to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and of the cross. ¶ *Let thy loving-kindness.* Thy mercy. ¶ *And thy truth.* Thy promises; thy plighted support and strength; thy fidelity. That is, he prayed that God would show himself true and faithful in bearing him through the great work of the atonement. ¶ *Continually.* Through the whole of these sorrows. Do not for a moment leave or forsake me. ¶ *Preserve me.* Keep me from sinking under these woes; from speaking any improper word; from shrinking back; from being overcome by the tempter; from failing in the great work now to be accomplished. As the Redeemer had a human as well as a Divine nature; —as he was man, with all human susceptibilities to suffering, it was not inappropriate that he should utter this prayer, and lift up his heart with the utmost earnestness to God, that he might not be forsaken in the consummation of the great work of his life, and that this work might not fail.

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about.* Have surrounded me, or have beset me on every side. The "evils" here referred to, understood as being those which came upon the Messiah, were sorrows that came upon him in consequence of his undertaking to do what could not be done by sacrifices and offerings (ver. 6); that is, his undertaking to save men by his own "obedience unto death." The *time* referred to here, I apprehend, is that when the full effects of his having assumed the sins of the world to make expiation for them came upon him; when he was about to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary. ¶ *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.* On this passage, as constituting one of the main objections, and the strongest objection, to the application of the psalm to the Messiah, and on the way in which such objection may be met, see introd. to this psalm (3 *b*). ¶ *So that I am not able to look up.* This is not the exact idea of the Hebrew word. That is simply, I am not able *to see;* and it refers to the dimness or failure of sight caused by distress, weakness, or old age.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha!

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1 Sam. iii. 2; iv. 15; 1 Kings xiv. 4; comp. Ps. vi. 7. The idea here is, not that he was unable to *look up*, but that the calamities which came upon him were so heavy and severe as to make his sight dim, or to deprive him of vision. Either by weeping, or by the mere pressure of suffering, he was so affected as almost to be deprived of the power of seeing. ¶ *They are more than the hairs of mine head.* That is, the sorrows that come upon me in connexion with sin. The idea is that they were innumerable,—the hairs of the head, or the sands on the seashore, being employed in the Scriptures to denote what cannot be numbered. See Ps. lxix. 4. Comp. Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12; Josh. xi. 4; 2 Sam. xvii. 11. ¶ *Therefore my heart faileth me.* Marg., as in Heb., *forsaketh.* The idea is, that he sank under these sufferings; he could not sustain them.

13. *Be pleased, O* LORD, *to deliver me.* That is, in these troubles and sorrows. See Matt. xxvi. 39. The prayer is that, if possible, the cup of sorrow might be taken away. ¶ *O* LORD, *make haste to help me.* This is the same form of prayer, and referring, I suppose, to the same occasion as that which occurs in Ps. xxii. 19. See Notes on that verse.

14. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together.* See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 4, 26. This may be understood here rather as a confident expectation than a wish or desire. It implies the certainty that they *would* thus be ashamed and confounded; that is, that they would not be successful, or would be foiled in their purposes. But understood as a wish or prayer, it could not be improper. There is no sin in the wish that the wicked may not be successful in their plans, and may not be suffered to injure us. As the language of the Messiah it was in every way an appropriate prayer that the purposes of those who would defeat his design in coming into the world might be foiled,—for on the execution of that design depended the salvation of a lost race. ¶ *That seek after my soul to destroy it.* That seek after my life; that would destroy me. That is, they seek to kill me; they would take my life before the full time is come. As understood of the Messiah, this would refer to the times when his life was in danger, as it often was, before the full period had arrived for him to die: John vii. 6; Matt. xxvi. 18. The *purpose* of his enemies was to take his life; to prevent the spread of his doctrines; to check him in his work. The taking of his life at any time before the full period had arrived, or in any other way than that in which he had purposed to lay it down, would have been a defeat of his work, since in the plan of salvation it was contemplated that he *should* die at a certain time, and in a certain manner,—that he should die at the time which had been predicted by the prophets, and in such a mode as to make an atonement for sin. All this would have been defeated if, before that time came, he had been put to death by stoning, or in any of the numerous ways in which his life was threatened. ¶ *Let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil.* Turned backward, as they are who are unsuccessful, or are defeated. Comp. John xviii. 6.

15. *Let them be desolate.* The word here employed means *to be astonished* or *amazed;* then, to be laid waste, or *made desolate.* As used here, it refers to their purposes, and the wish or prayer is that they might be wholly unsuccessful, or that in respect to success they might be like a waste

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

17 But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the LORD thinketh [n] upon me: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

[n] ver. 5; 1 Pet. v. 7.

and desolate field where nothing grows. ¶ *For a reward.* The word here used—עֵקֶב, *aikeb*—means the *end*, the last of anything; then, the recompence, reward, wages, as being the *end*, the *result*, or *issue* of a certain course of conduct. That is, in this case, the "desolation" prayed for would be a proper recompence for their purpose, or for what they said. ¶ *Of their shame.* Of their shameful act or purpose; their act as deserving of ignominy. ¶ *That say unto me, Aha, aha.* That use language of reproach and contempt. This is a term of exultation over another; a word of rejoicing at the calamities that come on another; an act of joy over a fallen enemy: Ezek. xxv. 3.; see Notes on Ps. xxxv. 21, 25. As understood of the Messiah, this would refer to the taunts and reproaches of his enemies; the exultation which they manifested when they had him in their power,—when they felt secure that their vexations in regard to him were at an end, or that they would be troubled with him no more. By putting him to death they supposed that they might feel safe from further molestation on his account. For this act, this note of exultation and joy, on the part of the Jewish rulers, and of the people as stimulated by those rulers, the "desolation" which came upon them (the utter ruin of their temple, their city, and their nation) was an appropriate "reward." That desolation did not go *beyond* their desert, for their treatment of the Messiah,—as the ruin of the sinner in the future world will not go *beyond* his desert for having rejected the same Messiah as his Saviour.

16. *Let all those that seek thee.* All those who desire to know thee; to understand thy ways; to be thy friends. The phrase is used to denote the truly pious, because it is a characteristic of all such that they truly desire to be acquainted with God, and to find the way which leads to his favour. ¶ *Rejoice and be glad in thee.* (1) By finding thee, or securing the object which they sought; (2) *in* thee, as the source of all true comfort and joy. The prayer is that all such may be successful in *their* efforts, while those who have no such aim may be disappointed, ver. 14. ¶ *Let such as love thy salvation.* (*a*) Thy *method* of salvation, or the appointed way by which men may be saved; and (*b*) the *salvation* itself,—deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin, and complete and eternal restoration to the favour of God. ¶ *Say continually, The* LORD *be magnified.* See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 27, where the same expression occurs.

17. *But I* am *poor and needy.* More literally, "I am afflicted and poor." The language would describe the condition of one who was afflicted and was at the same time poor; of one who had no resource but in God, and who was passing through scenes of poverty and sorrow. There were undoubtedly times in the life of David to which this language would be applicable; but it would be far more applicable to the circumstances in which the Redeemer was placed; and, in accordance with the interpretation which has been given of the other parts of the psalm, I suppose that this is designed to represent his afflicted and humble condition as a man of poverty and sorrow. ¶ Yet *the* LORD *thinketh upon me.* The Lord cares for me; he has not forgotten me. Man forsakes me, but he will not. Man leaves me to poverty and sorrow, but he will not. How true this was of the Redeemer, that the "Lord," the Father of mercies,

"thought" on him, it is not needful now to say; nor can it be doubted that in the heavy sorrows of his life this was a source of habitual consolation. To others also — to all his friends—this is a source of unspeakable comfort. To be an object of the *thoughts* of God; to be had in his mind; to be constantly in his remembrance; to be certain that he will not forsake us in our trouble; to be assured in our own minds that one so great as God is—the infinite and eternal One—will never cease to "think" on us, may well sustain us in all the trials of life. It matters little who *does* forsake us, if he does not; it would be of little advantage to us who *should* think on us, if he did not. ¶ *Thou* art *my help and my deliverer.* Implying the highest confidence. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *Make no tarrying, O my God.* Do not linger or delay in coming to my assistance. The psalm closes with this prayer. Applied to the Redeemer, it indicates strong confidence in God in the midst of his afflictions and sorrows, with earnest pleading, coming from the depth of those sorrows, that God would interpose for him. The vision of the psalmist extended here no farther. His eye rested on a suffering Messiah,—afflicted, crushed, broken, forsaken—with all the woes connected with the work of human redemption, and all the sorrows expressive of the evil of sin clustering upon him, yet confident in God, and finding his last consolation in the feeling that God "*thought*" on him, and in the assurance that He would not ultimately forsake him. There is something delightful, though pensive, in the close of the psalm. The last prayer of the sufferer—the confident, earnest pleading—lingers on the ear, and we almost seem to behold the Sufferer in the depth of his sorrows, and in the earnestness of his supplication, calmly looking up to God as One that "thought" on him when all others had forgotten him; as a last, safe refuge when every other refuge had failed. So, in our sorrows, we may lie before the throne, calmly looking up to God with a feeling that we are *not* forgotten; that there is *One* who "thinks" on us; and that it is our privilege to pray to him that he would hasten to deliver us. All sorrow can be borne when we feel that *God* has not forgotten us; we may be calm when all the world forsakes us, if we can feel assured that the great and blessed God "thinks" on us, and will never cease to remember us.

PSALM XLI.

This psalm, ascribed to David, has, in its general design and spirit, a strong resemblance to Ps. xxxviii. The occasion on which it was composed is not certainly known; but, like that, it seems to have been when the author was suffering under bodily sickness, not improbably brought on him by mental sorrows caused by the ingratitude of his friends, or by those nearly related to him in life. It is certain that his bodily sufferings were either caused or aggravated by the neglect of his friends; by their cold treatment of him; by their ingratitude towards him; by the reports which they circulated in regard to him. See Ps. xxxviii. 11, 12; comp. Ps. xli. 5-9. It was this unkindness certainly which greatly increased his suffering, and which probably gave occasion to the psalm. Who the persons were that thus treated him with neglect and coldness cannot now be ascertained; nor is it necessary to know *who* they were in order to appreciate the meaning and the beauty of the psalm. Their conduct is so accurately and so feelingly described, that it would be no particular advantage to be made acquainted with their names.

The case, therefore, in the psalm is that of one who is sick; who is forsaken by his friends; who is subjected to unkind remarks alike when they are with him and when absent from him; of one, therefore, whose only refuge is God, and who looks to *him* for sympathy.

According to this view, the psalm may be conveniently divided into four parts:—

I. The psalmist dwells on the blessed character of one who *does* show compassion or kindness to the poor and the suffering; the blessedness of the man who *is* merciful, vers. 1-3. This is evidently a reflection *forced* upon him by

PSALM XLI.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

BLESSED [o] *is* he that considereth the [1] poor: the LORD will deliver him in [2] time of trouble.

[o] Prov. xiv. 21; Heb. vi. 10.
[1] *weak*, or, *sick*. [2] *the day of evil*.

the opposite conduct of those whom he supposed he might have regarded as his friends, and to whom he had a right to look for sympathy and kindness. In his own mind, therefore, he *contrasts* their actual conduct with the character of the truly kind and merciful man, and is led, in few words, to describe the happiness which *would* follow if proper kindness were shown to the poor and the afflicted. He says that the effect of such conduct would be (*a*) that the Lord would deliver such an one in the time of trouble, ver. 1; (*b*) that the Lord would preserve him alive, ver. 2; (*c*) that he would be blessed upon the earth, ver. 2; (*d*) that the Lord would not deliver him to the will of his enemies, ver. 2; (*e*) that he would strengthen him on the bed of languishing, and would make his bed in his sickness, ver. 3.

II. An appeal to God for mercy, and for restoration to health, with an humble confession that it was for his own sin that he was suffering; and with a purpose not to attempt to justify himself, or to say that he had not deserved this at the hand of God, ver. 4. He makes no complaint of God, much as he had occasion to complain of his friends.

III. A statement in regard to the manner in which he had been treated in his sickness, vers. 5-9. (*a*) His enemies took occasion to speak evil of him, and to utter the wish, in a manner which would be most painful to a sufferer, that he might die, and that his name might perish, ver. 5. (*b*) If they came to see him in his sickness, instead of speaking words of kindness and comfort, they spoke only "vain" and unmeaning words; they sought occasion to gratify their own malignity by finding something in his manner, or in his language, which they could repeat to his disadvantage, ver. 6. (*c*) All that hated him took occasion now to *conspire* against him, to lay together all that they individually knew or could say that would be injurious to him, and to urge their individual causes of complaint against him in a general statement in regard to his character, ver. 7. (*d*) They especially sought to injure him by reporting that a disease clave to him which was the result of sin, perhaps of an irregular life, and that there was no prospect that he would be again restored to health; that the hand of God was upon him, and that he must sink to the grave, ver. 8. (*e*) All this was aggravated by the fact that his own familiar friend, some one who had enjoyed his confidence, and had partaken of the hospitality of his table, had abused his friendship, and was found among his detractors and calumniators, ver. 9.

IV. An earnest invocation of the mercy of God, and an expression of the confident assurance of his favour, closes the psalm, vers. 10-13.

This psalm, like Ps. xxxviii., which it so much resembles, is one that will be always eminently useful to those who are visited with sickness, and who, at the same time, are deprived of the sympathy in their sufferings which the afflicted so much need and desire, and who, instead of sympathy, are subjected to detraction and calumny, —their enemies taking advantage of their condition to circulate unfavourable reports in regard to them, and their heretofore professed friends withdrawing from them, and uniting with their calumniators and detractors. Such cases may not be *very* common in the world, but they occur with sufficient frequency to make it proper that, in a book claiming to be inspired, and designed to be adapted to all times and all classes of men, they should be referred to, and that we should be told what is the true source of consolation in such troubles. Indeed, a book professing to come from God would be defective in the highest degree if such a case were *not* provided for, and if suitable instructions for such an occasion had not been furnished by precept, or example, or both. On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv.

1. *Blessed* is *he*. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. Literally, "Oh the blessings of him that considers the poor." The object is to describe the advantages of doing what is here said; or the excellence of the spirit which would be manifested in such a case, and the effect which this would have on his own happiness. These happy effects

2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and [1] thou wilt not [p] deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:

[1] Or, *do not thou.* [p] Ps. xxxvii. 32, 33.

are described in the remainder of this verse, and in the two following verses. ¶ *That considereth.* The word here used —from שָׂכַל, *sachal*—means properly to look at, to behold; then, to be prudent or circumspect; then, to attend to; and then in general to act prudently, wisely, intelligently, in any case. Here it means to attend to; to show an interest in; to care for. The idea is that of *not* neglecting; *not* passing by; *not* being indifferent to; *not* being hard-hearted and uncharitable towards. ¶ *The poor.* Marg., *the weak*, or *the sick.* The word used in the Hebrew—דַּל, *dal*—means properly something hanging or swinging, as of pendulous boughs or branches; and then, that which is weak, feeble, powerless. Thus it comes to denote those who are feeble and helpless either by poverty or by disease, and is used with a general reference to those who are in a low or humble condition, and who need the aid of others. The statement here is of a *general* nature, —that he is blessed who shows proper sympathy for all of that class: for those who need the sympathy of others from any cause—poverty, sickness, a low condition, or trouble. The *particular* thing here referred to was a case of sickness; where one was borne down by disease, perhaps brought on by mental sorrow, and when he particularly needed the sympathy of his friends. See vers. 5–8. ¶ *The* LORD *will deliver him in time of trouble.* Marg., as in Heb., *in the day of evil.* This is the *first* happy effect or result of showing proper sympathy with others in their troubles. It is a statement of the general principle that the Lord will deal with us as we do with others. See this principle stated and illustrated in Ps. xviii. 24–26.

2. *The* LORD *will preserve him, and keep him alive.* This is a farther statement of the same principle, and it refers to a *general*, not a *universal* rule in the Divine administration, that acts of piety will be partially rewarded on the earth; or that the Divine favour will be shown to those who deal kindly with others. This principle is often referred to in the Scriptures. See Notes on Ps. i. 3; xxxvii. 3, 4, 11, 23–26, 37; comp. Matt. v. 5; 1 Tim. iv. 8. The *particular* application here is, that if any one showed kindness to him that was sick or enfeebled by disease, he might expect that God would interpose in his case under similar circumstances, and would "preserve" him, or "keep him alive." Of course this is to be regarded as a statement made under the general principle. It is not to be interpreted as teaching that this would be *universally* true, or that he who did this would never die, but the meaning is, that he might look for special Divine aid and favour, when he in turn should be sick. ¶ And *he shall be blessed upon the earth.* This is in accordance with the doctrine noticed above, and so often referred to in the Psalms and elsewhere, that the effect of religion will be to promote happiness and prosperity in this life. ¶ *And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.* Marg., *Do not thou deliver.* The margin, perhaps, expresses most correctly the sense of the original, but still it is an expression of the confident belief of the psalmist that this *will* not occur; a belief expressed here rather in the form of a prayer than of a direct assertion. The idea is, that he would find God to be a defender and a helper when he was attacked by his foes.

3. *The* LORD *will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.* The word rendered *strengthen* here means

thou wilt [1] make all his bed in his sickness.

4 I said, [q] LORD, be merciful unto me; heal [r] my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me,

[1] *turn.* [q] Ps. xxxii. 5. [r] Ps. cxlvii. 3; Hos. vi. 1.

to support; to uphold; to sustain. The idea here is, that God would *enable* him to bear his sickness, or would impart strength — inward strength—when his body failed, or when but for this aid he must sink under his disease and die. The word rendered *languishing* means properly langudor or sickness; and more generally something *sickening*; that is, something unclean, unwholesome, nauseating, Job vi. 6. The idea here, in accordance with what is stated above, is, that acts of religion will tend to promote our welfare and happiness in this life; and more particularly that the man who shows favour (ver. 1) to those who are weak, sick, helpless, will find in turn that God will support him when he is sick. Thus, Ps. xviii. 25, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful." ¶ *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* Marg., as in Heb., *turn.* So the LXX., ἐστρεψας. Luther renders it, "Thou dost help him." The idea is, that God will *turn* his bed or his couch; that is, that he will render favour like turning his couch, or making his bed when he is sick; or, in other words, he will relieve his suffering, and make him comfortable on his bed. It does not mean that he will turn his sickness to health, but that he will relieve and comfort him, as one is relieved and soothed on a sick bed by having his bed "made up." This, too, is in accordance with the general sentiment that God will show himself merciful to those who are merciful; kind to those who are kind. On the bed of languishing it will be much to be able to remember that we, in our health, have contributed to the comfort of the sick and the dying. (*a*) The recollection itself will do much to impart inward satisfaction then, for we shall then appreciate better than we did when we performed the act the value of this trait of character, and have a deeper sense of gratitude that we have been able to relieve the sufferings of others; (*b*) we may believe and trust that God will remember what we have done, and that he will manifest himself to us then as our gracious supporter and our comforter. It will not be because by our own acts we have *merited* his favour, but because this is his gracious purpose, and because it is in accordance with his nature thus to bestow kindness on those who have been kind to others.

4. *I said,* LORD. I said in my sickness, or in the trial referred to in the psalm. I called on God to be merciful to me when others had no mercy; to be near to me when others turned away; to save me when pressed down with disease on account of my sins. All that follows relates, like this passage, to what occurred when he was sick; to the thoughts that passed through his mind, and to the treatment which he then experienced from others. ¶ *Be merciful unto me.* In forgiving my sins, and restoring me to health. ¶ *Heal my soul.* In restoring my *soul* to spiritual health by forgiving the sin which is the cause of my sickness; or it may mean, Restore my *life,*—regarding his *life* as (as it were) diseased and in danger of extinction. The probability, however, is that he had particular reference to the *soul* as the word is commonly understood, or as designating *himself;* heal, or restore *me.* ¶ *For I have sinned against thee.* Regarding his sin as the cause of his sickness. See Notes on Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4, 5.

5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me.* They take occasion to speak evil of me in my weak and feeble state, thus adding to my sorrows. The word "*evil*" here refers to their calumnies or reproaches. They spoke of him as a bad man; as if it were desirable

When shall he die, and his name perish?

6 And if he come to see *me*, he [s] speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *when* he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.

[s] Prov. xxvi. 24, 25.

that he should die; that his influence in the world should come to an end, and that his name should be forgotten. ¶ *When shall he die.* "He is sick; sick on account of his sins; it seems certain that he will die; and it is desirable that such a man *should* die. But he seems to linger on, as if there were no hope of his dying." Nothing can be imagined more unkind, cutting, severe than this,—the desire that a man who is sick shall die, and be out of the way. Nothing could add more to the sorrows of sickness itself than such a wish; than to have it talked about among men—whispered from one to another—that such a man was a nuisance; that he was a bad man; that he was suffering on account of his sins; that it was desirable that his death should occur as soon as possible, and that all remembrance of him on earth should cease. ¶ *And his name perish.* That he should be forgotten altogether; that his name should be no more mentioned; that all the influence of his life should cease for ever. Of a truly bad man—a corrupter of the faith and the virtue of others—this *is* desirable, for the sooner such men are forgotten the better. Forgotten they will be (Prov. x. 7), but there is no more malignant feeling in regard to a good man, and especially when such a man is suffering under a severe disease, than the wish that he should die, and that his name should wholly fade away from recollection.

6. *And if he come to see* me. If he condescends to visit me in my sickness. The word "me" is not in the original; and perhaps the idea is not that he came to see the sufferer, but that he came to see *for himself*, though under pretence of paying a visit of kindness. His real motive was to make observation, that he might find something in the expressions or manner of the sufferer that would enable him to make a report unfavourable to him, and to confirm him in his impression that it was desirable such a man should die. He would come under the mask of sympathy and friendship, but really to find something that would confirm him in the opinion that he was a bad man, and that would enable him to state to others that it was desirable he should die. ¶ *He speaketh vanity.* He utters no expressions of sincerity and truth; he suggests nothing that would console and comfort me; his words are all foreign to the purpose for which a man should visit another in such circumstances, and are, therefore, vain words. What he says is mere pretence and hypocrisy, and is designed to deceive me, as if he had sympathy with me, while his real purpose is to do me mischief. ¶ *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself.* Or, in his heart he is gathering mischief. That is, in his heart, or in his secret purpose, under the pretence of sympathy and friendship, he is really aiming to gather the materials for doing me wrong. He is endeavouring to find something in my words or manner; in my expressions of impatience and complaining; in the utterances of my unguarded moments, when I am scarcely conscious—something that may be uttered in the honesty of feeling when a man thinks that he is about to die—some reflections of my own on my past life—some confession of sin, which he may turn to my disadvantage, or which may justify his slanderous report that I am a bad man, and that it is desirable that *such* a man should live no longer. Can anything be imagined more malicious than this? ¶ When *he goeth abroad, he telleth* it. Literally, he tells it to the street, or to those who are without. Perhaps his friends, as malicious as himself, are anxiously waiting without for his re-

7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise [1] my hurt.

8 [2] An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: and *now* that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.

[1] *evil to me.* [2] *A thing of Belial.*

port, and, like him, are desirous of finding something that may confirm them in their opinion of him. Or perhaps he designs to tell this to the friends of the sufferer, to show them now that they were deceived in the man; that although in the days of his health, and in his prosperity, he *seemed* to be a good man, yet that now, when the trial has come, and a real test has been applied, all his religion has been found false and hollow; his impatience, his complaining, his murmuring, and his unwillingness to die, all showing that he was a hypocrite, and was at heart a bad man. Comp. Notes on Job i. 9–11.

7. *All that hate me whisper together against me.* They talk the matter over where they suppose that no one can hear; they endeavour to collect and arrange all that can be said against me; they place all that they can say or think as individuals, all that they have separately known or suspected, into *common stock*, and make use of it against me. There is a *conspiracy* against me—a purpose to do me all the evil that they can. This shows that, in the apprehension of the sufferer, the one who came to see for himself (ver. 6) came as one of a company—as one deputed or delegated to find some new occasion for a charge against him, and that he had not to suffer under the single malignity of one, but under the combined malignity of many. ¶ *Against me do they devise my hurt.* Marg., as in Heb., *evil to me.* That is, they devise some report, the truth of which they endeavour to confirm by something that they may observe in my sickness which will be injurious to me, and which will prove to the world that I am a bad man—a man by whose death the world would be benefited. The slanderous report on which they seemed to agree is mentioned in the following verse,—that he was suffering under a disease which was directly and manifestly the result of a sinful life, and that it must be fatal.

8. *An evil disease.* Marg., *a thing of Belial.* The Hebrew is literally *a word of Belial.* This has been very variously understood and interpreted. The LXX. render it, λόγον παράνομον—a wicked word; "a wicked determination" (Thompson); that is, they formed a wicked purpose against him, to wit, by saying that he was now confined to his bed, and could not rise again. The Latin Vulgate renders it in a similar manner: Verbum iniquitum constituerunt adversum me. Luther, "They have formed a wicked device (*Bubenstück*) against me;" they behave in a knavish or wicked manner. De Wette, "Destruction (*Verderben*) or punishment (*Strafe*) is poured upon him." The term rendered *disease* means properly *word* or *thing;* and Professor Alexander renders it, "A word of Belial is poured upon him." The word rendered *evil, Belial,* means literally *without use*—בְּלִיַּעַל—from בְּלִי, *beli, not* or *without,* and יַעַל, *yaal, use* or *profit.* Then it means worthlessness, wickedness, destruction; and hence, in connexion with *man,* denotes one who is wicked, worthless, abandoned. It is difficult to determine its meaning here. The *connexion* (ver. 3) would seem to suggest the idea adopted by our translators; the *words* themselves would seem rather to convey the idea of some reproach, or harsh saying—some vain, wicked, malicious words that were uttered against him. That there was disease in the case, and that the psalm was composed in view of it, and of the treatment which the author experienced from those who had been his professed friends when suffering under it, seems to me to be manifest from vers. 1, 3, 4, 8; but it is probable that the reference in this

9 Yea, [1] mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which [t] did eat of my bread, hath [2] lifted up *his* heel against me.

[1] *the man of my peace.*

[t] Job xix. 19; John xiii. 18. [2] *magnified.*

expression is not to the disease, but to the words or the conduct of his calumniators. It is evident from the pronoun *him*—the third person—that this refers, as our translators have indicated by the words "*say they*" to something that they *said* in regard to him; something which they affirmed as the result of their observations on his condition, vers. 6, 7. The true idea, therefore, I think is this:—"They say—that is, those who came to see me said—A 'word of evil'—*a sentence of evil or destruction*—is poured upon him. He is suffering under such a 'word of destruction;' or, such a word (that is, sentence) as will involve his destruction, by way of punishment for his sins; therefore all is over with him, and he must die. He can hope to rise no more." This would express the idea that they regarded his death as certain, for he seemed to be under a sentence which made that sure. ¶ *Cleaveth fast unto him.* Or rather, *is poured upon him.* The word here used—יָצוּק, *tzuk*—means (1) to be narrow, straitened, compressed; and then (2) to pour out—as metal is poured out (Job xxviii. 2), or as words are poured out in prayer (Isa. xxvi. 16). Here it would seem to mean that such a sentence was poured upon him, or that he had become *submerged* or swallowed up under it. It was like the pouring out of a torrent on him, overwhelming him with floods of water, so that he could not hope to escape, or to rise again. ¶ *And* now *that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.* There is no hope for him; no prospect that he will ever get up again. They felt that they might indulge their remarks, therefore, freely, as he would not be able to take revenge on them, and their expectations and hopes were about to be accomplished by his death. Comp. ver. 5. As a part of his sufferings, all this was aggravated by the fact that they regarded those sufferings as full proof of his guilt; that he could not reply to their accusations; and that he was about to die under that imputation.

9. *Yea, mine own familiar friend.* Marg., as in Heb., *the man of my peace.* The man with whom I was at peace; who had no cause of alienation from me; with whom I was associated in the most peaceful and friendly relations. ¶ *In whom I trusted.* He whom I made my confidential friend, and on whom I supposed I could rely in the time of trouble. ¶ *Which did eat of my bread.* This may either denote one who was supported by him as one of his family, or else one who partook of his hospitality. In the former case, if that is the meaning, he had a right to expect that, as a matter of gratitude, such an one would stand by him, and not be found among his enemies. In the latter case, if that is the meaning, he had a right to expect that one who had shared his hospitality would not be found among his foes. ¶ *Hath lifted up* his *heel* against me. Marg., as in Heb., *magnified.* So the LXX. and the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders this, "hath trodden me under his feet." The figure here is taken from a horse that turns and kicks him that had fed him. This passage is applied (John xiii. 18) to Judas, with the statement, in regard to him, that what he had done was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled:" see Notes on that passage. It is not necessary to suppose that the Saviour meant to say that the passage in the psalm had *original* and *exclusive* reference to Judas; the phrase employed by the Saviour, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," may have been used by him in that large sense in which these words are often used as denoting, either (*a*) that the

10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

language found in the Scriptures, and applicable originally to another case, *would properly express the idea*, or describe the fact; or (*b*) that the case referred to was *one of a class;* or that, as it was accomplished in the case of David, so in a similar sense it was accomplished in the case of the Saviour. In other words, Judas was regarded as belonging to the same class as the individual to whom the psalm refers. He was one to whom the language of the psalm was applicable; and the Saviour endured the same kind of suffering which the person did who is referred to in the psalm. Thus the *language* of the Scriptures, applicable to all such cases, received a complete fulfilment in Him. It is remarkable that, in the reference to Judas, the Saviour quotes only a part of the verse: "He that eateth bread with me." He omits, apparently from design, the former part of the verse in the psalm, "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted," as if he would not even *seem* to convey the idea that he ever regarded Judas as his intimate friend, or as if he had ever really "trusted" him. He conveys the idea that Judas had partaken largely of his favours, but not that He himself was ever really a stranger to the baseness of his heart, John vi. 64, 70.

10. *But thou, O* LORD, *be merciful unto me.* That is, give me strength; restore me from my sickness and weakness. ¶ *And raise me up.* From my bed of languishing. ¶ *That I may requite them.* That I may repay them; or may recompense them. The word here used—שָׁלַם, *shalam*—means properly, to be whole, sound, safe; then, in Piel, to make secure, or preserve in safety; and then, to complete, to make whole, to make good, to restore; and then, to make whole or to complete in the sense of *recompensing* or *requiting*:—to make the matter *equal*. It would be well expressed here by the familiar language, *giving them what they deserve.* But it is not *necessary* to understand this as indicating an unforgiving spirit. The writer *may* have meant to say that the persons who demeaned themselves in this manner *ought* to be punished; that the public good required it; and being a magistrate, he spoke as one appointed to administer the laws, and prayed for a restoration to strength, that he *might* administer justice in this and in all similar cases. It is *possible* also that he meant to say he would repay them by "heaping coals of fire on their heads"—by acts of kindness in place of the wrongs that they had done him (see Prov. xxv. 21, 22; comp Rom. xii. 20, 21); though I admit that this is not the obvious interpretation. But in order to show that this was uttered with a bad spirit, and under the promptings of revenge, it would be necessary to show that neither of these *supposable* interpretations *could be* the true one. It may be added here that we may not be required to vindicate all the expressions of personal feeling found in the Psalms in order to any just view of inspiration. See General Introduction, § 6 (6).

11. *By this I know.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xx. 6. This indicates a confident assurance that his prayer would be answered, and that he would be restored to health. How he had this assurance we are not informed, but it seems most probable that it was by an intimation conveyed to his mind by God himself. Comp., for a similar case, Phil. i. 25. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *That thou favourest me.* That thou dost delight in me; that thou art my friend. ¶ *Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.* The word here rendered *triumph* properly means to shout, or to make a noise. As a sign of exultation, more especially in war: 1 Sam. xvii. 20. Here it means that his enemy would not

12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

13 Blessed *be* [t] the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

[t] Ps. lxxii. 18, 19.

secure a victory over him; or would not shout *as if* such a victory were obtained. That is, he felt assured now that all the machinations of his foes would be defeated; that all the hopes which they cherished that he was soon to die would be disappointed; that he himself would be recovered from his sickness, contrary to their malicious anticipations and desires. This he regarded as an evidence that God was his friend.

12. *And as for me.* Literally, "and I;" as if there were some verb understood. The reference is turned on himself; on all that was suggested by this train of remark as bearing on himself. The result of the whole was a firm assurance that God would sustain him, and that he would be established before God for ever. The train of thought is this: "And I—thou upholdest me." Perhaps the course of expression, if it had not been suddenly changed, would have been, "And I am sustained or held up." The thought, however, turns rather on *God* than on *himself*, and instead of carrying out the reference to himself so prominently, he turns to *God* as the source whence all this was derived. ¶ *Thou upholdest me.* Not merely in strengthening me in my sickness, but, what is more important, in vindicating my character against the aspersions which are cast upon it. Thou dost show that I *am* upright. ¶ *In mine integrity.* Literally, "in my *perfection.*" See Notes on Job i. 1. The word here means *uprightness, sincerity, probity.* He had been calumniated by his foes. His sickness had been regarded by them as a proof that he was a hypocrite or a stranger to God. If he had died, they would have urged that fact as evidence that he was the object of the Divine displeasure. His restored health was clear proof that their suggestions were false, and that he was not suffering for the cause which they alleged. God thus showed that he regarded him as upright and sincere. The claim is not that of *absolute perfection*, but only of a character of piety or integrity in opposition to the slanderous charges of his enemies. Comp. Ps. vii. 8; xxv. 21; xxvi. 1, 11. ¶ *And settest me before thy face for ever.* That is, Thou *wilt* do it. God would always have him in his presence, permit him always to dwell with him—the highest proof of his friendship.

13. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *God of Israel.* That is, Let the Lord God of Israel be *praised, honoured, adored.* The language is an expression of desire that all honour, all happiness, might be His. It is a recognition of God as the source of the mercies referred to, and an expression of the feeling that he is entitled to universal praise. The word *Israel* here refers to the people of God as descended from Jacob or Israel. ¶ *From everlasting, and to everlasting.* Through eternity, or eternal ages,—from all past duration to all future duration. The expression "*from* everlasting *to* everlasting," would embrace eternity; and the idea is that God is deserving of *eternal* praise. ¶ *Amen, and amen.* The word *amen* means properly *surely, certainly, truly,* and is a word expressive of solemn affirmation, or of the desire of the mind that this should be so. Its repetition is emphatic, expressing *strong* assent to what is said as certainly true, or as *eminently* the wish of the mind. This benediction marks the close of one of the five books into which the Psalms are commonly divided. See the General Introduction, § 3.

APPENDIX

PSALM I.

3. *And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* Blessed is the man who hath such a promise as this. But we must not always estimate the fulfilment of a promise by our own eyesight. How often, if we judge by feeble sense, may we come to the mournful conclusion of Jacob, "All these things are against me!" For though we know our interest in the promise, yet we are so tried and troubled that sight sees the very reverse of what promise foretells. But to the eye of faith this word is sure, and by it we perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity which he longs for. We often, like Jehoshaphat, make ships to go to Tarshish for gold, but they are broken at Ezion-geber; but even here there is a true prospering, for it is often for the soul's health that we should be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man's mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man's crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.—*Spurgeon.*

6. *But the way of the ungodly shall perish.* Not only shall they perish themselves, but their way shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity; but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very way of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity.—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM II.

7. *Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.* For a full discussion of the doctrine of Christ's eternal sonship, with special reference to Mr. Barnes' peculiar views on it, the reader is referred to the supplementary notes under Rom. i. 4; Heb. i. 3. We insert here the admirable note of Dr. J. A. Alexander, which leaves nothing to be desired in so far as this text and its bearing on the question are concerned:—"Whether this be regarded as part of the decree or law itself, or as a mere preamble to it, the relation here described is evidently one which carried with it universal dominion as a necessary consequence, as well as one which justifies the use of the expression *My King* in ver. 6. It must be something more then than a figure for intense love or peculiar favour, something more than the filial relation which theocratic kings, and Israel as a nation, bore to God. Nor will any explanation of the terms fully meet the requisitions of the context except one which supposes the relation here described as manifest in time to rest on one essential and eternal. This alone accounts for the identification of the persons as possessing a common interest, and reigning with and in each other. This profound sense of the passage is no more excluded by the phrase *this day*, implying something recent, than the universality of Christ's dominion is excluded by the local reference to Zion. The point of time, like the point of space, is the finite centre of an

infinite circle. Besides, the mere form of the declaration is a part of the dramatic scenery or costume with which the truth is here invested. The ideas of a king, a coronation, a hereditary succession, are all drawn from human and temporal associations. *This day have I begotten thee*, may be considered, therefore, as referring only to the coronation of Messiah, which is an ideal one. The essential meaning of the phrase *I have begotten thee*, is simply this, *I am thy Father*. The antithesis is perfectly identical with that in 2 Sa. vii. 14, 'I will be his father and he shall be my son.' Had the same form of expression been used here, *this day am I thy Father*, no reader would have understood *this day* as limiting the mutual relation of the parties, however it might limit to a certain point of time the formal recognition of it. It must also be observed that even if *this day* be referred to the inception of the filial relation, it is thrown indefinitely back by the form of reminiscence or narration in the first clause of the verse. *Jehovah said to me*, but when? If understood to mean from everlasting or eternity, the form of expression would be perfectly in keeping with the other figurative forms by which the Scriptures represent things really ineffable in human language. The opinion that this passage is applied by Paul, in Ac. xiii. 33, to Christ's resurrection, rests upon a misapprehension of the verb *raised up*, which has this specific meaning only when determined by the context or the addition of the words *from the dead*, as in the next verse of the same chapter, which is so far from requiring the more general expressions of the preceding verse to be taken in the same sense, that it rather forbids such a construction, and shows that the two verses speak of different stages in the same great process: first, the raising up of Jesus in the same sense in which God is said to have raised him up in Ac. ii. 30; iii. 22, 26; vii. 37; *i.e.* bringing him into being as a man; and then the raising up from the dead, which the apostle himself introduces as another topic in Ac. xiii. 34. There is nothing, therefore, inconsistent with the statement that the psalmist here speaks of eternal sonship, either in the passage just referred to, or in Heb. v. 5, where the words are only cited to prove the solemn recognition of Christ's sonship, and his consequent authority, by God himself. This recognition was repeated, and, as it were, realized at our Saviour's baptism and transfiguration, when a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him!'"

Speaking of the psalm as a whole, the reader will be delighted with our author's admirable defence of the exclusively Messianic reference. Even Calvin, who still holds the foremost place among commentators on the Psalms, and who first applied the principle of types to the interpretation of the Messianic psalms, seems to have erred here. "As often happens," says Dr. Binnie, "the great reformer having got hold of a valuable principle, went to the extreme in the application of it. In no psalm except Ps. cx. did he find Christ set forth without some intervening type. In the second psalm he thinks there is an immediate reference to David, and in Ps. xlv. to the nuptials of Solomon; and in this he has been followed by many commentators of the highest standing. But the interpretation in both instances is, I venture to think, destitute of solid foundation. It is difficult, no doubt, to draw a line between the psalms which relate exclusively to Christ and those in which he is seen through the veil of some type. . . . There are passages in Isaiah (ch. ix. and xi. for example) in which Christ and his reign are celebrated in imagery wholly taken from David's reign, yet no one regards them as anything but direct predictions. There is no reason to deny the same character to Ps. ii. and xlv. To expound them as having a primary reference to David or Solomon is simply to introduce confusion and embarrassment."—*The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use*, p. 187.

We subjoin also the following remarks of Dr. Delitzsch:—"The two names of the future One in use in the time of Jesus, ὁ χριστός and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, Jn. i. 50; Mat. xxvi. 63 (in the mouth of Nathanael and of the high-priest), refer back to this psalm and Dan. ix. 25, just as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου incontrovertibly refers to Ps. viii. 5 and Dan. vii. 13. The view maintained by De Wette and Hupfeld, that the psalm is not applicable to the Christian conceptions of the Messiah, seems almost as though these were to be gauged according to the authoritative utterances of the professorial chair, and not according to the

language of the apostles. Even in the Apocalypse, ch. xix. 15; xii. 5, Jesus appears exactly as this psalm represents him, as ποιμαίνων τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. The office of the Messiah is not only that of Saviour, but also of Judge. Redemption is the beginning, and the judgment the end of his work. It is to this end that the psalm refers."

PSALM III.

2. *Selah.* This is a musical pause, the precise meaning of which is not known. Some think it simply a rest, a pause in the music; others say it means "Lift up the strain—sing more loudly—pitch the tune upon a higher key—there is nobler matter to come, therefore retune your harps." Harp-strings soon get out of order and need to be screwed up again to their proper tightness, and certainly our heart-strings are evermore getting out of tune. Let *Selah* teach us to pray,

> "O may my heart in tune be found
> Like David's harp of solemn sound."

At least, we may learn that wherever we see *Selah*, we should look upon it as a note of observation. Let us read the passage which precedes and succeeds it with greater earnestness, for surely there is always something excellent where we are required to rest and pause and meditate, or when we are required to lift up our hearts in grateful song. "SELAH."—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM IV.

3. *The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* How happy all God's servants are! They are set apart as vessels of honour, (1) by a free, eternal, holy, unchangeable choice in Christ Jesus; (2) by a powerful, internal, spiritual regeneration; (3) by a perfect, irrepealable justification; (4) by a kind, wise, watchful Providence ordering everything in their lot, and distinguishing them in this, that all things work together for their good, making their sorrows more blessed than the joys of the wicked, and giving them the victory even in death; (5) such shall be openly and gloriously owned and set apart in the last day. They are set apart to God's service and honour and enjoyment here and hereafter.—*Wm. S. Plumer, D.D., LL.D.*

8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.* Sweet evening hymn! I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will lie down; and then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down in peace and sleep, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was hunted by bloodthirsty foes. Note the word "only," which means that God alone was his keeper, and that though alone, without man's help, he was even then in good keeping, for he was "alone with God." A quiet conscience is a good bed-fellow. How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ.

O Lord, give us this calm repose on thee, that, like David, we may lie down in peace and sleep each night while we live; and joyfully may lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death, to rest in God.—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM VI.

8. *For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.* What a fine Hebraism, and what grand poetry it is in English! "He hath heard the voice of my weeping." Is there a voice in weeping! Does weeping speak! In what language doth it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which is known and understood in all the earth, and even in heaven above. When a man weeps, whether he be a Jew or Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, it has the same meaning in it. Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an unstammering orator, needing no interpreter, but understood of all. Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession, which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will weep when I cannot plead, for thou hearest the voice of my weeping.—*Spurgeon.*

9. *The Lord hath heard my supplication.* Never was a more mournful complaint uttered than that in the previous

verses, yet the psalmist finds relief in God. "How different is all this from the miserable shifts to which ungodly men are driven! In their extremity dreadful sullenness and remorse, alternate bluster and fainting, boasting and cowering, mark their state. Shortly before his death Byron said, 'Shall I sue for mercy?' Pausing a considerable time, he made this desperate answer to his own question: 'Come, come, no weakness; let's be a man to the last.' That miserable pupil of Voltaire, the pedantic King Frederick II. of Prussia, had lived to feed his ambition, and after remarkable successes was compelled to say: 'It is unhappy that all who suffer must flatly contradict Zeno, as there is none but will confess pain to be a great evil. It is noble to raise oneself above the disagreeable accidents to which we are exposed, and a moderate stoicism is the only means of consolation for the unfortunate. But whenever the stone, the gout, or the bull of Phalaris mix in the scene, the frightful shrieks which escape from the sufferers leave no doubt that pain is a real evil. . . . The heart is conscious of a wound, the stoic freely confesses; I should feel no pain, but I do feel it against my will, it consumes, it lacerates me; an internal feeling overcomes my strength, and extorts from me complaints and fruitless groans.'"—*Plumer.*

Conclusion of the Psalm. Many of the mournful psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer that he is continually to look forward and solace himself with beholding that day when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for the robe of glory, and every tear become a sparkling gem in his crown; when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angelic harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty. —*Horne.*

PSALM VIII.

The author in this place maintains the same views on which we had occasion to remark in the supplementary note under Heb. ii. 6. The reader will find in it a somewhat full view of the principle on which Ps. viii. and others of the same class are in the New Testament applied to Christ. We find it difficult to persuade ourselves that "the psalm does not appear originally to have any designed reference to the Messiah," but contains only "the principle on which the apostle reasons in Heb. ii.;" as if he had said, We find here an illustration of a principle set forth in the Psalms. This method of interpretation seems to destroy the idea of prophecy entirely, or to reduce it to the level of mere accommodation of what was long ago said by certain old authors, to present or passing events. We subjoin the excellent note of Dr. Binnie:—Ps. viii. has a certain title to the foremost place amongst those which hold forth Christ under the veil of some type. For, in this instance, the type under which he is presented is the oldest of all the types, being no other than the common progenitor of the race. Adam, we know, was "the figure of him that was to come." He prefigured Christ in this very notable respect, that as he was the head and surety of the entire race, insomuch that in his fall they fell; so Christ is the head and surety of the entire church, insomuch that by his obedience they are constituted righteous, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. The primary scope of the psalm is to celebrate the condescending bounty of God displayed in endowing our nature in the person of Adam with such a rich heritage of privilege; crowning it with glory and honour, making it to have dominion over the works of his hands, and subjecting all things to its rule. "Excellent endowments (some one may say); but is it not mockery of our fallen condition to ask us to celebrate them now, after they have been forfeited by our apostasy from God?" The answer is, that they were forfeited, but are now restored. And the restoration is made in a way exactly corresponding to the manner of the original endowment. It is made to God's people in the person of their common Head and Surety by whose blood the lost heritage has been redeemed. The grant first made to the race in Adam, is made a second time to the church in Christ, the second Adam. Hence the remarkable way in which the epistle to the Hebrews cites the psalm, as if it had been a prediction regarding Christ. It celebrates the second Adam and his dominion, under the type of the first Adam and his.—P. 186.

Delitzsch gives the same view:—The dominion of the world lost to fallen

man, and only retained by him in a ruined condition, is allotted to mankind, when redeemed by him, in fuller and more perfect reality. This dominion is not yet in the actual possession of mankind, but in the person of Jesus it now sits enthroned at the right hand of God. In him the idea of humanity is transcendently realized, *i.e.* according to a very much higher standard than that laid down when the world was founded. He has entered into the state—only a little (βραχύ τι) beneath the angels—of created humanity for a little while (βραχύ τι), in order to raise redeemed humanity above the angels. Everything (כֹּל) is really put under him with just as little limitation as is expressed in this psalm: not merely the animal kingdom, not merely the world itself, but the universe with all the ruling powers in it, whether they be in subjection or in hostility to God, yea, even the power of death, 1 Co. xv. 27; cf. Eph. i. 22.

2. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.* There seems no end to be gained by denying the original reference to little children, seeing the principle involved undoubtedly is that God would accomplish great effects by those who were feeble and weak. "David," says Perowne very beautifully, "speaks literally of children. And so our Lord himself applies the words, Mat. xxi. 16. Even the faith of a little child is bulwark enough against the mischief of men of corrupt heart and perverted intellect. The stars above, and the lips of infants below, show forth his praise." So also Calvin, De Wette, and Alexander.

PSALM IX.

11. *Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.* Being full of gratitude himself our inspired author is eager to excite others to join the strain, and praise God in the same manner as he had himself vowed to do in the first and second verses. The heavenly spirit of praise is gloriously contagious, and he that hath it is never content unless he can excite all who surround him to unite in his sweet employ. Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together; and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther's psalms and hymns were in all men's mouths; and in the modern revival under Wesley and Whitfield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety. The singing of the birds of praise fitly accompanies the return of the gracious spring of divine visitation through the proclamation of the truth. Sing on, brethren, and preach on, and these shall both be a token that the Lord still dwelleth in Zion. It will be well for us when coming up to Zion to remember that the Lord dwells among his saints, and is to be had in peculiar reverence of all those that are about him.—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM X.

8-10. *In the lurking places of the villages,* &c. That is, in concealed places, in the thicket, in the neighbourhood of towns, they lie in wait for the peaceable inhabitants, with the view of suddenly falling upon them, and killing or plundering them. Our own abode in the East gives us a lively idea of the condition of society which this describes. During the three years of our abode in Baghdad, it was invariably considered most dangerous for any one to venture alone beyond the walls of the city, which was felt as a great hardship, as entirely precluding us from those solitary suburban walks to which we had been accustomed at home. We were constantly hearing of persons who on venturing out had been plundered and sent home naked by the Arabs infesting the neighbourhood. They were roughly handled and sometimes slain if they offered the slightest resistance. At this place the evil was exhibited to us in the most distinct forms, and became familiar from being always present to the mind; but we remember few places we visited in South-western Asia in which it was not considered dangerous for a person who looked as if he had anything to lose, to venture out of the towns and villages.—*Pictorial Bible.*

The Arab robber lurks like a wolf among these sand-heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveller, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand-hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about or lag behind; and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here—Khaifa before,

Acre in the rear, and travellers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so. There are a hundred allusions to just such things in the history, the Psalms, and the prophets of Israel. A whole class of imagery is based upon them (Ps. x. 8–10). A thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travellers. You observe that all these people you meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Khaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way. Strange, most strange land! but it tallies wonderfully with its ancient story.—*The Land and the Book*, p. 314.

PSALM XII.

6. *The words of the Lord are pure words.* Not only all true, but all pure, "like silver tried in a furnace of earth" or crucible. It notes, 1st. The sincerity of God's word. Everything is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise; it doth not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design upon us but our own good. 2d. The preciousness of God's word. It is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. 3d. The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth. It has been often tried; all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so tried it, and it never deceived them or frustrated their expectation; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *experto crede*,—"trust one that has made trial;" they have found it so. Probably this refers especially to those promises of succouring and relieving the poor and distressed. Their friends put them in hopes they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed. But the words of God are what we may rely upon; and the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.—*Henry.*

PSALM XIV.

1-3. *They are corrupt, . . . there is none that doeth good.* It is the first three verses that are cited by the apostle in support of the doctrine that "both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin," and that "the whole world is become guilty before God." And certainly the terms applied by the psalmist are quite as universal in their sweep as those of the apostle. Indeed this very fact, that the terms are so sweeping, has been urged as a reason why some construction less severe should be put upon the psalm. "The psalmist (it is argued) cannot mean that all men, without exception, are such as he describes. For we know that, in fact, they are not so. There is a congregation of the righteous. In the worst times, God has his seven thousand who abide faithful to him. And even beyond that circle there is much virtue to be found, much civil righteousness, much beautiful natural affection." The objection is plausible; nevertheless the apostle's interpretation is the only one that will stand. No doubt there is a congregation of the godly on earth; but they are what they are, not by nature, but by the grace of God; so that their godliness does not avail to mitigate our judgment regarding fallen human nature. And as for the natural virtues that still adorn the world and claim the admiration of men, they are vitiated before God by this, that there is no regard in them to his will. The gravamen of the psalmist's indictment against natural men is, that "they do not seek after God."

This one passage is sufficient to demonstrate original sin. For if all men, everywhere and always, turn away from God till his grace recover them, there must be some reason for doing so. A constant event indicates a law of nature. There must be in mankind a deep malignity of nature, an inborn ungodliness of heart.—*Dr. Binnie*, p. 243.

We refer the reader also to our supplementary note under Ro. iii. 10, where a somewhat full view is given of the bearing of the psalmist's words on the question of universal depravity. The remarks of Pres. Edwards on the point in his treatise on Original Sin are of special force and value.

PSALM XVI.

It is difficult to decide between the two views of direct Messianic reference and of typical reference. The direct reference to Christ seems supported by the language of Peter in Ac. ii. On the other hand, there is difficulty in carrying this principle throughout the psalm, where so much has a primary and manifest fulfilment in the person of David.

But whatever reference the psalmist may have had to his own circumstances, there can be no doubt that he was carried beyond himself. And he seems to have been perfectly conscious that it was so. The critical acumen and sound judgment displayed by Mr. Barnes, in his notes under ver. 10, have not been surpassed in any commentary that has come under our eye. We add the following from Dr. J. P. Smith and Dr. Hengstenberg:—

The structure of this remarkable psalm is derived from the consolation enjoyed by David, in his difficulties and sufferings, from his reliance upon the great promise which God had made to him. That promise involved a guarantee, that he himself should not be overcome or utterly circumvented by his personal enemies; and the cheering meditation upon the transcendent mercies of God to him was employed by the prophetic spirit as a vehicle for elevating his mind to the inspired contemplation of his great though unknown descendant. "He, therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that with an oath God had sworn to him, of the descendants of his body according to the flesh, to raise up the Christ, to seat him upon his throne; seeing this before, spake concerning the resurrection of the Christ." Hence the King of Israel glanced but slightly upon his own troubles and consolations, and passed on to the contemplation of the theme which absorbed all his thoughts and enraptured him into the visions of a glory that should at last fill the whole earth.—Smith's *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, p. 201.

It still remains for us, now that we have finished our exposition of the psalm, to investigate its Messianic import. That such an import does belong to it is certain, even apart from the testimonies of the New Testament. The situation evidently appears to be that of one who found himself in great danger, and whose life was threatened. But the psalmist does not rest with the hope of obtaining deliverance from that particular danger; his soul rises higher; he triumphs, not only over the danger then present, but over death itself, exclaims, "Death! where is thy sting? Hell! Where is thy victory?" The *ground* of hope is connected with that, which, for the moment, was necessary, and the hope itself is expressed more comprehensively. The assurance is declared quite generally, that death and the grave can exercise no power over him who is inwardly united to the living God: of this he is confident, nor for the present moment merely, but for ever, ver. 11; and on that account, certainly for the present also, in respect to which he primarily gives utterance to the general hope.

Apart from Christ this hope must be regarded as a chimera, which the issue would put to shame. David served God in his generation, and then he died, was buried, and corrupted. But in Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light, it becomes perfectly true. David, in Christ, could speak as he does here, with full right. Christ has conquered death, not merely for himself, but also for his members. His resurrection is the ground of our resurrection; for can the head fail to draw its members along with it? In so far as what is here hoped for to the members can only be experienced by them in consequence of its having been first experienced by the head, so far the psalm must be considered as a prophecy of Christ.

But how far David himself clearly understood the Messianic subject of this hope we cannot ascertain. That the prophecy in respect to Christ was for him not an altogether unknown one, the declaration of Peter in Ac. ii. 30, 31 implies; while Paul stands simply on the ground that the psalm was fully verified in Christ. That the heroes of the Old Testament, in their more elevated moments, were favoured with a deep insight into the mystery of the future redemption, is affirmed by our Lord himself, Jn. viii. 56. A more or less conscious connection between the hope of eternal life and the expectation of Christ, is attended with the less difficulty, as this connection constantly appears, where we find in later times the hope of eternal life expressed in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.—*Hengstenberg.*

The exclusively Messianic reference is defended by Principal Fairbairn in his *Typology*, vol. i. p. 132; and the principles laid down by him are worthy of careful attention on the part of students of prophecy.

PSALM XVII.

11, 12. *They have now compassed us in our steps*, &c. The whole passage gives a graphic picture of a person surprised, compassed, and dodged by ene-

mies, eagerly watching to take him for a single moment at advantage. The images are derived from circumstances which are of no uncommon occurrence at the present day in Palestine. It forcibly reminds us of an adventure which occurred to Dr. Olin, when he unadvisedly strayed at some distance from the caravan near Jericho. "The traveller in these unfortunate countries hears so many tales of robbery and violence, that they cease to produce any feelings of alarm, or even to insure the necessary forethought and caution. It was hardly an hour after listening to such recitals that I left the camp unattended, and quite forgetful of danger, to examine some ancient aqueducts." Having examined them, he was about to proceed to the fountain of Elisha, when—"I was approached by two Bedouins, armed with matchlocks and short swords, in the usual manner. They were bareheaded, an unusual circumstance, the hair being shaven close, with the exception of a small lock left long according to the fashion of these barbarians. Two more villanous assassin-like knaves I do not remember to have met with. They pretended, when I first saw them, to be engaged in taking care of some horses which were grazing loose near by, but soon left them and advanced directly up to me. I felt the unpleasantness of my situation, and saw my gross imprudence in wandering a mile or more from the camp alone, and in a region which, I had such good reason to know, was full of robbers. It was too late, however, to retreat; and I had only to make the best of my situation, and learn more prudence for the future. I saluted my unwelcome visitors with a courteous salaam, at the same time stepping back a little, as they had approached nearly within arm's length. I had no weapons, not so much as a walking-stick. Franks, however, are believed by these people to go always well armed: an impression which I tried to confirm by putting my hand in my bosom, as if to see that my pistols were ready for service. At the same time I armed myself with a couple of heavy stones, with which I hoped, if necessary, to prevent mischief from the crazy matchlocks, which must be ignited by the aid of a flint and steel before becoming very formidable. The fellows halted, in seeming suspense as to what they should do. They looked at the encampment, a mile distant, but still conspicuously in view, and near enough for the report of a musket to be heard. They were very small men, even for Bedouins; and I thought they eyed my stature of six feet with an appearance of respect, which, under the circumstances, was certainly gratifying to me. After a season of suspense, which seemed to me to be tedious, they retreated a few paces, and after consulting together for a moment, commenced urging me to go with them to the wady that opens into the mountain near the Jerusalem road, pointing eagerly in that direction, and exclaiming, 'El deir, el ain,' as if acquainted with the objects of my visit. They even seemed disposed to take hold of my hands and lead me towards these interesting objects. I declined their civilities with a resolute tone, designing to let them know that I took them for robbers, and at the same time keeping near them, as the best position for the use of my weapons, should that become necessary. After some minutes they retired towards the Western Mountain, and I, when they were gone a good distance, commenced my return to the camp, at first very carelessly, as being in no hurry, but as soon as I thought prudent, at a quicker step. It was now after sunset. I crossed the ravine by walking along the channel of the lower aqueduct. Here I met several English gentlemen of our party, and heard from them of some additional robberies that had been committed during the afternoon upon some of the pilgrims who had proceeded without a guard a little beyond the camp."—*Pictorial Bible.*

15. *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.* David, in Ps. xvii., when his faith is subjected to a trial of the same sort as Asaph's, finds comfort in the same thought which was so helpful to his friend. Turning away from the "men of the world, whose portion is in this life," he makes this lofty profession of his hope. The strength of these testimonies (Ps. lxxiii. 24, 26; xvii. 15) to the faith of the psalmists does not lie within the scope of a merely grammatical interpretation. The expressions made use of do not by themselves absolutely compel us to reject the lower and temporal meaning, which accordingly is advocated by some commentators of great eminence. But, standing where they

stand, they naturally raise the mind to the higher meaning, and have done so in the vast majority of sober unbiassed readers ever since they were penned. Those words of David, for instance, in which he describes his enemies as "men of the world, whose portion is in this life," do they not by plain implication hold forth the godly as men who are *not* of this world, and whose portion is in another life? The words are exactly parallel to those of the apostle, in which, contrasting himself with many "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things," he declares that "our conversation (that is, *our citizenship, our country,* πολίτευμα) is in heaven." This being the psalmist's meaning, is it for a moment to be supposed that when he goes on, as he does in the words that follow, to profess his faith in God with respect to the future, the jubilant hope he utters is bounded by the grave? Is it to be supposed that this soul, conscious of the divine image, of present communion with God, and of an interest in his love as its proper portion—is it to be supposed, I say, that such a man has no better hope to utter than that ere he finally quits the world—ere he bids farewell to the sun and the fair face of nature, and the sweet companionships of the earth—ere he passes to a land of darkness and silence, and deep forgetfulness, where the light of God's face will never shine—he shall be satisfied with some transient gleams of the divine favour? Can this be all that David means in comforting himself with the hope of a bright awakening, when he shall behold the face, and be satisfied with the likeness of God?—*Binnie.*

PSALM XVIII.

Ps. xviii. is undoubtedly Messianic. Apostolical authority concurs with internal evidence in showing that the person who speaks in it is Christ. Yet nothing can be more certain than that it is not predictive of Christ in the same high and exclusive sense as Ps. cx. It was written by David in thankful commemoration of the kindness of the Lord in delivering him "from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." Not only is there a superscription to that effect, but the whole poem is inserted in the history of David's reign, as a document relative to the period. Such having been the origin and primary intention of the poem, the question will be asked, On what principle do you refer to Christ a song in which, as you admit, David speaks of himself, his dangers, his marvellous escapes, the eventual establishment of his throne, and wide extension of his sway? This is a perfectly fair question. Since it is a question, moreover, which crosses the path of every careful student of the Bible, and is apt to cause serious perplexity, the discussion of it cannot be declined, even although it brings up some points which are amongst the most difficult in the whole domain of biblical theology.

When we classify the Messianic psalms, according to the "diverse manners" in which they severally speak of Christ, they arrange themselves into three principal groups. First, there is a large group, consisting of those in which Christ is present in the person of David or some other type; then there is a smaller one, consisting of psalms which relate to him directly and exclusively; lastly, there is a group of undefined extent, consisting of psalms in which the person who speaks is "Christ mystical," the whole Church, the head and the members together.

. . . David knew that Christ was to be born of his seed, and that he was to be a king after the manner of David as well as a priest after the manner of Melchizedek. Accordingly, we find that in the psalms which unfold his own experience, he is sometimes lifted above himself, and speaks in terms which, although they may perhaps admit of being applied to himself, are much more easily and naturally applied to our Lord. Thus Ps. xviii., the great song of thanksgiving for the mercies of his life, rises at the close into this strain:—"Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his King, and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for ever." When these verses (49, 50) are quoted in the epistle to the Romans (ch. xv. 9) as a declaration on the part of Christ of his purpose to publish God's name amongst the Gentiles, the apostle is not to be understood as applying the words to Christ by way of arbitrary accommodation. No doubt the words are David's, and express his purpose to indite songs in which all nations might one day sing praise to the God of Abraham. But in the character in which he speaks

throughout the psalm, he so exactly prefigured Christ, that the whole is applicable to Christ as truly as to himself; and in these concluding verses he is moved by the Holy Spirit to utter words which, although true of himself, were much more perfectly fulfilled in Christ. And this is what we mean when we entitle his song of thanksgiving a *typically Messianic* psalm.—*Binnie*, p. 178-183.

2. *The Lord is my rock*, &c. The two first names, and also the last, are taken from the natural state of Palestine, where the precipitous rocks surrounded by deep ravines afford protection to the flying,—comp. "He sets me upon a rock," in Ps. xxvii. 5, for, He delivers me, Ju. vi. 2; 1 Sa. xxiv. 22; 2 Sa. v. 8. The predilection for this figurative description of the divine protection, which may be recognized not merely in the threefold repetition, but also in its forming both the beginning and the end, inclosing all the others, appears to have had its origin in the persecution of Saul. Then David often had to betake to rocks for refuge. He grounded the hope of his security, however, not upon their natural inaccessibility, but his mind rose from the corporeal rock to the spiritual, which he beheld under the form of the corporeal. The mode of contemplation to which he then became familiarized would readily suggest such figurative designations of God, his Deliverer, as his Rock, his Fastness, his Stronghold. Placed upon this Rock, he could say: *non curo te Cæsar*, with infinitely better right than he who, according to Augustine on Psalm lxx., called from a high natural rock to the emperor as he passed beneath.—*Hengstenberg.*

3. *I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.* He would teach us by this that there is nothing so bad, so great, so mighty, so long-continued which may not be overcome by the power of God if we only put our trust therein. Likewise that we then preeminently had cause to hope in the power of God, that it would then be mighty in us, when many great, strong, and constant evils forcibly press upon us, because it is a property of divine strength to help the little, the feeble, the dejected, not merely amid the evils of punishment, but also of guilt. For what sort of power were God's, if it could prevail over punishment alone, and not also over sin in us? So full is this passage of consolation; because the state of things it contemplates seems to be wholly against nature, and that one must abandon all hope, when not evil merely, but also great, weighty, and long-continued evil breaks in. . . . This doctrine is in tribulation the most ennobling and truly golden. One cannot believe what a powerful assistance such praise of God is in pressing danger. For the moment thou wilt begin to praise God, the evil also will begin to abate, the consoled heart will grow, and then will follow the calling upon God with confidence. There are people who cry to the Lord and are not heard, ver. 41. Why this? Because they do not praise the Lord when they cry to him, but go to him with reluctance; they have not represented to themselves how sweet the Lord is, but have looked only upon the bitterness. But no one gets deliverance from evil by simply looking upon his evil, and becoming alarmed at it; he can only do so by overcoming it, hanging upon the Lord, and having respect to his goodness. O doubtless a hard counsel! And a rare thing truly, in the midst of misfortune to conceive of God as sweet, and worthy of being praised, and when he has removed himself from us, and is incomprehensible, even then to regard him more strongly than our present misfortune which keeps us from regarding him. Only let every one try it, and endeavour at the praise of God, even though in little heart for it; he will presently experience an enlightment. For all other consolation profits not, or it profits in a deceitful manner; in other words, is highly injurious.—*Luther.*

6. *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.* Prayer is that postern-gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy; it is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner flees at once when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he *calls*, and then *cries;* prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of Jehovah, and then advances to a more familiar name, "My God;" thus faith increases by exercise, and he whom we at first viewed as Lord is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray; no distress should prevent us from using the divine re-

medy of supplication. Above the noise of the raging billows of death, or the barking dogs of hell, the feeblest cry of a true believer will be heard in heaven. "*He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*" Far up within the bejewelled walls, and through the gates of pearl, the cry of the suffering suppliant was heard. Music of angels and harmony of seraphs availed not to drown or even impair the voice of that humble call. The King heard it in his palace of light unsufferable, and lent a willing ear to the cry of his own beloved child. O honoured prayer, to be able thus, through Jesus' blood, to penetrate the very ears and heart of Deity! The voice and the cry are themselves heard directly by the Lord, and not made to pass through the medium of saints and intercessors; "My cry came before *Him;*" the operation of prayer with God is immediate and personal. We may cry with confident and familiar importunity, while our Father himself listens.—*Spurgeon.*

7. *Then the earth shook and trembled.* In this and the following verses David describes by the sublimest expressions and grandest terms the majesty of God and the awful manner in which he came to his assistance. The representation of the storm in these verses must be allowed by all skilful and impartial judges to be truly sublime and noble, and in the genuine spirit of true poetry. The majesty of God, and the manner in which he is represented as coming to the aid of his favourite king, surrounded with all the powers of nature as his attendants and ministers, and arming (as it were) heaven and earth to fight his battles, and execute his vengeance, is described in the loftiest and most striking terms. The *shaking of the earth;* the trembling of the mountains and pillars of heaven; the *smoke* that drove out of his nostrils; the *flames* of devouring fire that flashed from his mouth; the *heavens bending* down to convey him to the battle; his riding upon a *cherub,* and rapidly flying on the *wings of a whirlwind;* his concealing his majesty in the *thick clouds* of heaven; the bursting of the *lightnings* from the *horrid darkness;* the *uttering of his voice* in *peals of thunder;* the *storm* of *fiery hail;* the *melting of the heavens,* and their dissolving into floods of *tempestuous rain;* the *cleaving of the earth,* and disclosing of the bottom of the hills, and the subterraneous channels or torrents of water, by the very breath of the nostrils of the Almighty,—are all of them circumstances which create admiration, excite a kind of horror, and exceed everything of this nature that is to be found in any of the remains of heathen antiquity. See Longinus on the *Sublime,* and Hesiod's description of Jupiter fighting against the Titans, which is one of the grandest things in all pagan antiquity, though upon comparison it will be found infinitely short of this description of the psalmist's, throughout the whole of which God is represented as a mighty warrior going forth to fight the battles of David, and highly incensed at the opposition his enemies made to his power and authority.

When he descended to the engagement, the very heavens bowed down to render his descent more awful; his *military tent* was *substantial darkness;* the *voice* of his *thunder* was the *warlike alarm* which sounded to the *battle;* the *chariot* in which he rode was the *thick clouds* of heaven, conducted by *cherubs,* and carried on by the irresistible force and rapid wings of an *impetuous tempest;* and the darts and weapons he employed were *thunderbolts, lightnings, fiery hail, deluging rains, and stormy winds!*

No wonder that when God thus arose all his enemies should be scattered, and those who hated him should flee before him. See Chandler, Delaney, and Lowth's ninth Prelection.—*Adam Clarke.*

10. *And he rode upon a cherub and did fly.* On the origin and meaning of the cherubim we quote the following from our article in Appendix to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible,* p. 1181, 1182:—"Mr. Layard thinks that the coincidence between the winged lions and bulls of Nineveh, and Ezekiel's figures does 'certainly lead to the inference that the symbols chosen by the prophet were borrowed from the Assyrian sculptures;' and in both cases he thinks the figures are emblems of the divinity or of his perfections.

"We feel disposed to regard the Assyrian compound animals as remains of the patriarchal religion. In the tabernacle and temple were set up over the mercy-seat, overshadowing it, figures called *cherubim.* These same figures were painted on the walls of the temple, and embroidered on its curtains, as

they were on those of the tabernacle. Minute directions are given regarding every pin of the sacred structure—none regarding these. There is a simple command to introduce them. Our presumption is that they were well known. Indeed we read of 'cherubim' in connection with Eden, and the placing of cherubim before the garden intimates, according to the original, that he *set them in a tabernacle*, which formed the local and visible symbol of the divine presence. Now the prophet Ezekiel, in describing his compound figures (ch. x. 20), says, 'I knew they were the cherubim.' From all of which we conclude that the knowledge was handed down from patriarchal times, and that the form of the cherubim was so well known as to need no description, and that the Assyrians themselves were copyists from the original institute of the fathers of mankind. Originally the cherubim must have represented ministers or agents of providence; for symbols of the divine Being would not have been allowed, far less commanded, among the Jews."

33. *He maketh my feet like hinds' feet.* David points to the quick and unrestrained course of his conquests, just as already, in ver. 29, his springing over walls does not refer simply to David's personal deeds, but to what he did also by his army. In the second member, the heights are the hostile positions which David, in the strength of the Lord, surmounts. He names these heights *his* in faith; because he has the Lord for his helper, he considers them all beforehand as his possession, none as insurmountable. That we are not, with De Wette and others, to understand by the heights *places of refuge* is clear, not only from the context and parallelism, but also from the original passages in De. xxxii. 13, "He made him ride upon the high places of the earth;" and De. xxxiii. 29, "Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places," in which the discourse is not of secure flight, but of resistless victory, as it is also in the passage, Hab. iii. 19, which has respect to our verse, "The Lord is my strength, and he makes my feet like the hinds', and he makes me to walk upon my high places."—*Hengstenberg.*

44. *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.* Thus readily did the once struggling captain become a far-renowned victor, and thus easy shall be our triumphs. We prefer, however, to speak of Jesus. In many cases the gospel is speedily received by hearts apparently unprepared for it. Those who have never heard the gospel before have been charmed by its first message, and yielded obedience to it; while others, alas! who are accustomed to its joyful sound, are rather hardened than softened by its teachings. The grace of God sometimes runs like fire among the stubble, and a nation is born in a day. "Love at first sight" is no uncommon thing when Jesus is the wooer. He can write Cæsar's message without boasting, *Veni, vidi, vici;* his gospel is in some cases no sooner heard than believed. What inducements to spread abroad the doctrine of the cross!—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XIX.

1. *The heavens declare*, &c. In the East the consideration of the heavens is peculiarly adapted to give a deep impression of the greatness of God as Creator. When C. Niebuhr, many years after his return from the East, lay in bed under the blindness and exhaustion of old age, "the glittering splendour of the nocturnal Asiatic sky, on which he had so often gazed, imaged itself to his mind in the hours of stillness, or its lofty vault and azure by day, and in this he found his sweetest enjoyment." The heavens and the firmament are personified, and the announcement of the glory of the Creator is attributed to them, which is apprehended in them by the pious mind. This personification is chosen with reference to the actual manifestation of God in the words contained in ver. 7–10. Instead of "the glory of God," Paul, in the passage, Ro. i. 20, which alludes to this here, has "eternal power and Godhead." That the firmament is identical with the heavens appears from Ge. i. 8. It is the vault of heaven, in which are sun, moon, and stars, the shining witnesses of God's glory, in reference to which he bears the name of Sabaoth, God of hosts.—*Hengstenberg.*

The engraving MIDNIGHT SKY represents the southern part of the starry vault seen as it appears if we turn our back to the circumpolar stars. This immense zone very nearly embraces half the horizon from east to west, passing by the south, and extending in altitude to the zenith. It comprises the most beautiful constellations and

the most brilliant stars in the heavens. It is divided obliquely by the Milky Way. The annexed diagram will aid in understanding the following description.

Orion occupies nearly the middle view. This magnificent constellation forms a quadrilateral higher than it is broad, in the centre of which three stars of the second magnitude are arranged in a straight line. These are commonly called the Belt of Orion, and in Scotland the King's Elwand. Two of the stars of the quadrilateral, named



Betelgeuse and Rigel, are of the first magnitude. Betelgeuse is remarkable for the reddish tint of its light. Among the 115 stars visible to the naked eye, besides the two most brilliant, are included four of the second magnitude, and five between the second and the fourth.

In prolonging towards the north-west the line formed by the three stars in the Belt of Orion, the eye perceives a red star of the first magnitude: this is Aldebaran, the most beautiful star of the constellation Bull. Aldebaran is in the midst of a group of small stars named the Hyades. A little farther, in the same direction, will be found the Pleiades, so easy to recognize in the heavens by reason of the six stars visible to the naked eye, which compose this interesting group. The Bull contains 121 stars visible to the naked eye below the second magnitude.

If now we prolong towards the south-east of Orion, the line which has found for us Aldebaran on the north-west, we perceive near the edge of the Milky Way the constellation of the Great Dog, which includes Sirius, the most brilliant star in the two hemispheres, remarkable on account of its scintillation and by its dazzling whiteness.

Towards the east, and nearly at the same height as Betelgeuse, shines Procyon, on the other side of the Milky Way. This is a star of the first magnitude, and the most brilliant one in the constellation of the Little Dog. Betelgeuse, Sirius, and Procyon form a triangle, the three sides of which are nearly of the same apparent length. This circumstance enables us easily to recognize these stars. (*See above.*)

Above Procyon, and towards the zenith, Castor and Pollux point out the Twins, which include, besides these two stars of the first and second magnitudes, fifty-one stars visible to the naked eye. Towards the west, and by the side of the Pleiades, lies the constellation of the Ram, and a little below, those of the Whale and Eridanus, neither of which,

in those parts visible to us in London, contain any stars of the first magnitude.

But while we are enumerating and contemplating this brilliant portion of the heavens, the stars defile across it, set, and disappear in the west, whilst others rise in the east, revealing new constellations. . . . Thus "night unto night sheweth knowledge."

3. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.* The author points to the powerfulness of the testimony which the heavens deliver of God's glory. How strongly must the traces of God's glory be impressed upon them when they need no speech to make him known as their Creator, when they need only to be dumb-heralds of the divine greatness, and still they declare and show forth. It is commonly supposed by those who follow this exposition, that the sense is first completed by the addition of the following verse: they are indeed speechless, yet still their preaching is understood throughout the whole earth, so loudly do they proclaim, by their mere existence, the glory of God. But this supposition is not a necessary one; just as well, and even better indeed, we can say that here the powerfulness of the testimony is represented, and there the wide compass of its territory. The more definite דברים (literally, *words*) is added to אמר (*speech*), which admits of a more general construction, in order to signify that the matter is here of a discourse in the more restricted sense. Luther, Calvin, and others, expound:—There is no speech and discourse where their language is not heard. Calvin—"He extends through a silent contrast the efficacy of this testimony which the heavens give to their Creator, as if he said—Although the nations are very different in language, yet the heavens have a common speech for instructing all in like manner, and nothing but carelessness prevents all from being taught at the mouth of this common teacher." But it is to be objected to this exposition that it takes אמר and דברים in the sense of *dialect, language*, in which the first certainly never occurs, nor is Ge. xi. 1 sufficient to establish it as properly belonging to the latter; that the speech and language would not be very fitly connected with the hearing; that it requires אמר to be taken in another sense than it was in ver. 2, and forcibly separates between מספרים and מגיד in ver. 1; and finally, that it destroys the parallelism which is manifestly formed between the expressions: there is not speech, and there are not words, and: their voice is not heard.—*Hengstenberg.*

4. *Their line is gone out through all the earth*, &c. This passage is quoted in Ro. x. 18, "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world." Hodge on this place in Romans remarks, "This verse, therefore, is to be considered as a strong declaration that what Paul had proved ought to be done, had in fact been accomplished. The middle wall of partition had been broken down, the gospel of salvation, the religion of God, was free from its trammels, the offers of mercy were as wide and general as the proclamation of the heavens. This idea the apostle beautifully and appositely expresses in the sublime language of Ps. xix. His object in using the words of the psalmist was, no doubt, to convey more clearly and affectingly to the minds of his hearers the idea that the proclamation of the gospel was now as free from all national or ecclesiastical restrictions, as the instructions shed down upon all people by the heavens under which they dwell. Paul, of course, is not to be understood as quoting the psalmist as though the ancient prophet was speaking of the preaching of the gospel. He simply uses scriptural language to express his own ideas, as is done involuntarily almost by every preacher in every sermon." But this is certainly yielding too much to the accommodation theory. Dean Alford's comment is worthy of regard here:—"It is remarkable that so few of the commentators have noticed (I have found it only in Bengel, and there but faintly hinted: Olsh., who defends the applicability of the text, does not even allude to it) that Ps. xix. is *a comparison of the sun, and glory of the heavens*, with the *Word of God*. As far as ver. 6 the glories of nature are described: then the great subject is taken up and the parallelism carried out to the end. So that the apostle has not, as alleged in nearly all the commentators, merely accommodated the text allegorically, but *taken it in its context*, and followed up the comparison of the psalm. As to the assertion of the preaching of the gospel having gone out into all

the world, when as yet a small part of it only had been evangelized, we must remember that it is not the *extent* so much as the *universality in character* of this preaching, which the apostle is here asserting; that Word of God, hitherto confined within the limits of Judea, had now broken those bounds and was preached in all parts of the earth. See Col. i. 6, 23." So also Thrupp:—"In his contemplation of the firmament he had discovered yet another proof that God had not yet poured forth the full measure of his gifts. The heavens told their story to all the nations of the earth: God's revealed law was restoring the souls and rejoicing the hearts of only a single people. Nor could the uncertainty be removed till the time when the knowledge of God's truth should be universally diffused. The approach of that time it was left to a later prophet openly to announce; when the God of Jacob should teach many people of his ways, when the law should go forth out of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. But the same had in this psalm been indirectly heralded by David, in the stress laid by him on the universality of the testimony of God's creatures. And hence his words are by St. Paul actually quoted as a prophecy which was being fulfilled in the apostolic promulgation of the gospel."

5. *Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*, &c. I had occasion, a few weeks since, to take the early train from Providence to Boston, and for this purpose rose at two o'clock in the morning. Everything around was wrapt in darkness and hushed in silence, broken only by what seemed at that hour the unearthly clank and rush of the train. It was a mild, serene, midsummer's night—the sky was without a cloud—the winds were whist. The moon, then in the last quarter, had just risen, and the stars shone with a spectral lustre but little affected by her presence. . . . Such was the glorious spectacle as we entered the train. As we proceeded, the timid approach of twilight became more perceptible; the intense blue of the sky began to soften; the smaller stars, like little children, went first to rest; the sister beams of the Pleiades soon melted together; but the bright constellations of the west and north remained unchanged. Steadily the wondrous transfiguration went on. Hands of angels, hidden from mortal eyes, shifted the scenery of the heavens; the glories of night dissolved into the glories of the dawn. The blue sky now turned more softly gray; the great watch-stars shut up their holy eyes; the east began to kindle. Faint streaks of purple soon blushed along the sky; the whole celestial concave was filled with the inflowing tides of the morning light which came pouring down from above in one great ocean of radiance; till at length, as we reached the blue hills a flash of purple fire blazed out from above the horizon, and turned the dewy teardrops of flower and leaf into rubies and diamonds. In a few seconds the everlasting gates of the morning were thrown wide open, and the lord of day, arrayed in glories too severe for the gaze of man, began his state. . . . I am filled with amazement when I am told that in this enlightened age, and in the heart of the Christian world, there are persons who can witness this daily manifestation of the power and wisdom of the Creator, and yet say in their hearts, "There is no God."—*Everett.*

The bridegroom's ornaments and the giant's power are but faint images of the sun's mild splendour, and his swift penetrating light. All nature rejoices at his approach; the sweet melody of wood and grove hails his rising; before his face, the shadows of night flee away; wild beasts of the forest hasten to their retreats; and light, and cheerfulness, and happy industry revisit the habitations of men. Indeed one bright sun should for ever silence all cavillings respecting the fundamental truths of natural religion. "Where is your God? show him to me," said a proud heathen monarch to a devout Jew. "I cannot show you my God, but come with me and I will show you one of his messengers." Taking him to the open air he pointed him to the unclouded sun, and said, "Look at that." "I cannot, it pains my eyes," said the monarch. "Then," said the Jew, "how could'st thou look on the face of him, at whose rebuke the pillars of heaven tremble?"—*Plumer.*

7. *Converting the soul.* Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him. The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, "*the soul*" is moved and renewed. The great means of the conversion of sinners is

the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry the more likely are we to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. When the law drives and the gospel draws, the action is different but the end is one, for by God's Spirit the soul is made to yield, and cries, "Turn me, and I shall be turned." Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation.—*Spurgeon.*

12. *Secret faults.* Beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood called *The Dream of Eugene Aram*—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point on which we are now dwelling. Aram had murdered a man, and cast his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

"And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye;
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry."

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun—

"Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep;
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep."

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round, the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death.

Guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy. Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, "be sure your sin will find you out;" and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has made men to be so wretched in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the truth. Secret sinner! if thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character. Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is pursued by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler's net, and labouring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labours to escape from it, day by day making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh the misery of secret sins! One may well pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XX.

The inscription shows that the psalm was composed by David; but though he was its author, there is no absurdity in his speaking of himself in the person of others. The office of a prophet having been committed to him, he with great propriety prepared this as a form of prayer for the use of the faithful. In doing this, his object was not so much to commend his own person, by authoritatively issuing a royal ordinance, enjoining upon the people the use of this prayer, as to show, in the exercise of his office as a teacher, that it belonged to the whole church to concern itself, and to use its endeavours that the kingdom which God had erected might continue safe and prosperous. Many interpreters view this prayer as offered up only on one particular occasion; but in this I cannot agree. The occasion of its composition at first may have arisen from some particular battle which was about to be fought, either against the Ammonites or against some other enemies of Israel. But the design of the Holy Spirit, in my judgment, was to deliver to the church a common form of prayer which, as we may gather from the words, was to be used whenever she was threatened with any danger. God commands his people in general to pray for kings; but there was a special reason, and one which did not apply to any other kingdom, why prayer was to be made in behalf of this

kingdom; for it was only by the hand of David and his seed that God had determined to govern and maintain his people. It is particularly to be noticed that under the figure of this temporal kingdom there was described a government far more excellent on which the whole joy and felicity of the church depended. The object therefore which David had expressly in view was to exhort all the children of God to cherish such a holy solicitude about the kingdom of Christ as would stir them up to continual prayer in its behalf.—*Calvin.*

Nowhere does David's high sense of the dignity of his office shine more conspicuously forth than in the psalm to which we now proceed. It was obviously designed as a prayer to be used by the people in behalf of their king, whom they here address, proceeding forth to battle. Most modern critics join the Syrian translator in supposing that the occasion of the psalm was the commencement of the second campaign, conducted by David in person, of the war against the allied Ammonites and Syrians (2 Sa. x. 15–19). The proofs of this are first, its relation to the following psalm, which was probably composed on the final subjugation of the Ammonites; and secondly, the allusion to the enemy's reliance on their war-chariots and their cavalry, which formed the main strength of the Syrian host, and over which, in the campaign above mentioned, David signally triumphed. It has indeed been also urged that the words, "Now know I," &c. (ver. 5), imply a reference to some former victory, such as that which had been gained in the previous campaign over the united Syrians and Ammonites by Joab. But to this we can hardly assent. The words more probably express the feeling of confidence produced by the prayers and sacrifices that had just been offered; the faith of the suppliant rising into a sure anticipation of the issue. And it should also be noted that, although originally springing from the circumstances of a particular occasion, the psalm is sufficiently general in its character to have been sung again and again, even in its most literal acceptation, at the commencement of each new war. . . . This psalm, like Ps. xviii., is of a pre-eminently typical character. Its full sense was doubtless intended by David to culminate in the Messiah: it was a psalm of the future, its significance stretching far beyond the more immediate fulfilment, and from the first the more spiritually-minded among the Israelites could hardly have otherwise regarded it. But from the time that Zion's true King came to her, just, and having salvation, all doubt as to the true import of the psalm was removed. Messiah, having offered his one accepted sacrifice for sins, is now expecting till his enemies be made his footstool; and though himself seated at God's right hand in heaven, is in the person of his church gone forth upon earth conquering and to conquer. Confident in the Captain of her salvation, and sure that all his petitions to his Father will be accomplished, the church anticipates for herself a joyful career of victory, beseeching the King of heaven and earth so to hear her that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of his Christ, and thus be brought back to their rightful allegiance to himself.—*Thrupp.*

PSALM XXI.

The exclusively Messianic exposition, which has been defended by many of the older commentators, and latterly by Rosenmüller, in his 2d edition, is deprived by our view of the foundation which it was conceived to have in ver. 4, 7. It is opposed even by the undeniable reference which the psalm has to 2 Sa. vii. This admits of the application to Christ only in so far as the promise found its last and highest fulfilment in Him in whom the royal stem of David culminated, but at the same time imperiously demands the reference to Christ in this sense. Apart from Christ the words, "Thou givest him length of days for ever and ever," and "Thou settest him for blessing for ever," are nothing but an empty dream. —*Hengstenberg.*

The psalm could from the first have only applied to David in so far as the promises made to him would be ultimately realized in the person of Christ. It is of the same typical character with Ps. xviii. and xx. There are some who would regard it as applying to the Messiah alone, and would exclude, as in Ps. ii., all other reference. And they are able to appeal to the fact, that while in ver. 1–7 the king comes before us in the third person, and in ver. 8–12 in the second, he never throughout this psalm speaks in the first, and may therefore, as in Ps. ii., be viewed as entirely distinct from the psalmist. Yet

it will generally be felt that the second and third persons are here but poetical or conventional substitutes for the first. There is to the king of this psalm no superhuman dignity ascribed. The perpetuity of life assigned him does not exclude the reference to David, provided only that he and his house be contemplated in their ideal unity. And the same remark applies also to the declaration that God had "set him to be blessings" (ver. 6, Eng. marg. rendering), which was so far true of David that it was of his lineage that the future Saviour of men was to spring.

To us there can indeed be little inducement to behold in the king of this psalm any but Christ. We must recollect, however, that it is in his church that his royalty is on earth chiefly displayed. Nay, in one point of view the person of Christ may here be regarded as almost merging in that of his church, contemplated as the perpetuation of the church of Israel; and the fullest commentary on the psalm will then be found in the sixtieth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. The pardon bestowed upon David after his sin will be a type of God's mercy to the church of Israel notwithstanding her apostasy: "In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee." The pledge of God's faithfulness in the birth of Solomon will be a type of God's glorification of Israel by raising up, of the seed of Abraham, him through whom the church was to become "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." Of the Ammonitish crown, which he had gained, even David could hardly have made mention had he not viewed it as a type of the riches of the Gentiles that were to form the diadem of the church, while his severities to the foes whom he had subdued were a testimony to the church. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." If David's glory was great in God's salvation, this again was a pledge of the future glory with which the church should shine: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." The honour laid upon the church of Christ was thus to consist in her being a light to the world; and this too had been implied in the psalm, in the words of ver. 6, already quoted, which had virtually repeated, though with a limitation to David and his house, the words of the promise to Abraham, "Thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." For the fulfilment of the promises made through Nathan to David was manifestly designed to convey a general blessing to Israel, and to the world at large.—*Thrupp.*

3. *For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.* The word *prevent* formerly signified to precede or go before, and assuredly Jehovah preceded his Son with blessings. Before he died saints were saved by the anticipated merit of his death, before he came believers saw his day and were glad, and he himself had his delights with the sons of men. The father is so willing to give blessings through his Son, that instead of his being constrained to bestow his grace, he outstrips the mediatorial march of mercy. "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." Before Jesus calls, the Father answers, and while he is yet speaking he hears. Mercies may be bought with blood, but they are also freely given. The love of Jehovah is not caused by the Redeemer's sacrifice, but that love, with its blessings of goodness, preceded the great atonement, and provided it for our salvation. Reader, it will be a happy thing for thee if, like thy Lord, thou canst see both providence and grace preceding thee, forestalling thy needs, and preparing thy path. Mercy, in the case of many of us, ran before our desires and prayers, and it ever outruns our endeavours and expectancies, and even our hopes are left to lag behind. Prevenient grace deserves a song; we may make one out of this sentence; let us try. All our mercies are to be viewed as *blessings;* gifts of a blessed God, meant to make us blessed; they are *blessings of goodness*, not of merit, but of free favour; and they come to us in a *preventing way*, a way of prudent foresight, such as only preventing love could have arranged. In this light the verse is itself a sonnet!—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XXII.

There is yet another psalm for which

I would claim a place amongst those that are directly prophetical of Christ. I mean Ps. xxii. The majority of the best commentators, no doubt, regard it as referring throughout to David, and so rank it in the typical class. But the objections to that view are many, and, I think, unanswerable. For one thing, David's biography contains nothing corresponding to the account the Sufferer here gives of his tribulations (ver. 14–18). His enemies never "parted his garments among them or cast lots upon his vesture." Indeed, so inapplicable is the description to any Bible saint, that some who reject the direct reference to Christ are fain to attribute the psalm—in the teeth of all existing evidence—to "some afflicted person, otherwise unknown to us, during the captivity." Besides, even if it had been possible to find in the life of David or of some other saint a time of such sufferings as the psalm describes, those who see a primary reference to him would still have had to explain the remarkable hopes expressed in the latter part of it. The Sufferer, rising above the sense of his present sorrow, rejoices in the confident persuasion that, as the fruit of what he is now enduring, all the families of the earth shall one day be moved to return to the Lord, and to bow themselves down before him. This is a feature which so evidently points to the Man of Sorrows, that the great Jewish critics have betaken themselves to the same explanation by which they seek to get quit of the testimony of Isa. liii. to the cross of Christ. In both cases they labour to make out that the Sufferer described is the nation of Israel during the Babylonish captivity, and that the blessing so confidently anticipated to spring out of the sorrows of the chosen people was no other than that diffusion of the true religion which resulted from the dispersion of the exiles among the nations. The theory is ingenious, and it has been eagerly appropriated by the Rationalists. But there are things both in the prophecy and in the psalm that conclusively refute it. Thus, in the former, the Lord's righteous Servant whose sufferings are portrayed, instead of being identified with the people of Israel, is expressly contrasted with them (Isa. liii. 4–6.) In the psalm there is not only the same contrast (ver. 22, 23), but, from beginning to end, the terms in which the Sufferer's condition is described are too strongly individual to admit the hypothesis of personification. The only adequate and natural interpretation of the psalm is that which sees in it a lyrical prediction of the sufferings of Messiah and the glory that was to follow. No sufferer but one could, without presumption, have expected his griefs to result in the conversion of nations to God.

Moreover, it is not a vague description of a good man's sufferings that this great psalm sets forth. It goes into many details, and these so exactly corresponding to the sufferings of Christ, that the whole reads like a poetical version of the gospel history. (1.) The scene portrayed is a crucifixion, and just such a crucifixion as was witnessed at Calvary. The Sufferer cannot obtain the solace of retirement. He is encompassed by scornful men, who load him with reproaches. They deride the profession of his hope in God, and do so in terms which startle us by their identity with those actually employed by the crowds who encompassed the Lord's cross. All the dreadful accompaniments of crucifixion are seen;—the strength dried up like a potsherd—the bones out of joint—the burning thirst, making the tongue cleave to the jaws—the piercing of the hands and the feet[1]—the bones projecting so that one might count them—the parting of the garments by lot amongst the executioners. Surely the cross of Christ is here, and without the intervention of any type. (2.) Not only is the psalm cited by the evangelists as having been fulfilled in the cruoifixion, but the Lord employed it himself (Mat. xxvii. 46) in expressing the anguish of his soul. "About the ninth hour he cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Taking all the circumstances into account, it is a fair construction of this exclamation, to understand it with Augustine,[2] as equivalent to saying, The psalm was written concerning me. (3.) There is

[1] This remarkable expression in ver. 16 is rendered by many of the modern critics, according to the Masoretic punctuation and the Jewish interpreters, "like a lion my hands and my feet;" but the usual translation is supported by all the ancient versions, and yields the better sense. Indeed, the other yields no tolerable sense at all. Compare Mr. Perowne's note.

[2] *Enarratio* ii. in Ps. xxi. (xxii.) sec. 3.

in the psalm a singular alternation of deep dejection under present sorrow, and of solemn joy in the prospect of the blessings that are to accrue to all the nations. And this very alternation of conflicting sorrow and joy was seen in Christ, both on the cross and during the preceding week, John xii. 20–33. (4.) In one respect, the psalm stands alone in the Scriptures, and indeed in all religious literature. It is a cry out of the depths—the sorrowful prayer of One who is not only persecuted by man, but seems to himself, for the time, to be utterly forsaken of his God. Yet there is no confession of sin, no penitent sorrow, no trace of compunction or remorse. This distinguishes the psalm, quite unequivocally, not only from ordinary psalms of complaint, but from those in which Christ speaks in the person of David his type. The complaints found in them are never unaccompanied with confessions of sin. If David, or any other ancient saint, had written the twenty-second Psalm, as the expression of his own griefs and hopes, there would certainly have been audible in it some note of penitence.—*Binnie.*

1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* This was the startling cry of Golgotha: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani. The Jews mocked, but the angels adored when Jesus cried this exceeding bitter cry. Nailed to the tree we behold our great Redeemer in extremities, and what see we? Having ears to hear let us hear, and having eyes to see let us see! Let us gaze with holy wonder, and mark the flashes of light amid the awful darkness of that mid-day midnight. First, our Lord's faith beams forth and deserves our reverent imitation; he keeps his hold upon his God with both hands and cries twice, *My God, my God!* The spirit of adoption was strong within the suffering Son of Man, and he felt no doubt about his interest in his God. Oh that we could imitate this cleaving to an afflicting God! Nor does the sufferer distrust the power of God to sustain him, for the title used—*El*—signifies *strength*, and is the name of the mighty God. He knows the Lord to be the all-sufficient support and succour of his spirit, and therefore appeals to him in the agony of grief, but not in the misery of doubt. He would fain know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. What an inquiry is this before us! *Why hast thou forsaken me?* We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances. *Why?* what is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted? *Hast;* it is done, and the Saviour is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question; it is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threatening of forsaking which made the great Surety cry aloud, he endured that forsaking in very deed. *Thou:* I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but *thou* my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God. *Forsaken:* if thou hadst chastened I might bear it, for thy face would shine; but to forsake me utterly, ah! why is this? *Me:* thine innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why leavest thou *me* to perish? A sight of self seen by penitence, and of Jesus on the cross seen by faith, will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated between us and our God.—*Spurgeon.*

9. *Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.* Augustine, in the first book of his *Confessions*, finds great enjoyment and consolation in similar reflections, where he praises God with devout admiration for his creation and birth, and extols the divine goodness in taking him up, and committing him to the care and attention of his mother. Although thoughts such as these may appear childish, effeminate, and unseasonable, for those who are in such pain and conflicts, yet experience here teaches us to remember these tender, cheerful, lovely works of God, to seek a place of refuge when suffering the hard bites of the wrath and of the rod of God, and to enjoy the sweet and pleasant milk of our mother's heart, and all these other acts of mercy which were shown during the years of infancy. Thus shall we, when brought into trouble, be led to think (as we are commanded to do) on the days of happiness gone by; when distress and suffering are upon us, we shall remember the great grace and goodness of God manifested to us in early youth; and

when we suffer as men, we shall reflect on what we enjoyed when children. . . . Try, and you will then understand what it is to see the divine majesty employed and taken up with childish, that is, with small, insignificant, yea contemptible works.—*Luther.*

16. *They pierced my hands and my feet.* The following admirable remarks, in reply to Dr. J. A. Alexander (who inclines to the translation—"like a lion," and observes that the sense would then be, "they surround my hands and my feet as they would a lion," or "as a lion would," *i.e.* with the strength and fierceness of a lion), are abridged from the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1851:—"That there is in the sacred writers an absence of explicit declaration on the subject of the piercing of the feet in crucifixion, may perhaps be admitted; but by no means can it be admitted that there is a '*singular* absence' of such allusions; for this would imply that there existed a demand for such 'explicit declaration' in the New Testament, which is by no means the fact. Whatever the custom in crucifying might have been, it was universally known in the time of Christ, and for centuries afterwards. Nor is it easy to imagine what occasion could exist, under such circumstances, that should require of the sacred writers the 'explicit declaration' referred to. The fact, however, that he was thus pierced is sufficiently referred to and implied. For example, in Mat. xxvii. 35, 36, we have precisely the occurrences which are mentioned in Ps. xxii. 17-19, 'They *crucified* him' (that is, agreeably to the usages of crucifixion as then universally known, they pierced his hands and feet by nailing them to the cross), 'and parted his garments,' &c. Then in Lu. xxiv. 39, 40, the same idea is most forcibly implied in Christ's words to his disciples, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:' ἴδετε τὰς χεῖράς μου καὶ τοὺς πόδας μου, ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγώ εἰμι. It was by the marks which were visible in his hands and feet, therefore, that the disciples were to learn that he who then stood before them was he who had been crucified. . . .

"Dr. Alexander also considers it *very remarkable* that no citation or application of the clause occurs in any of the Gospels. But admitting it to be even so, what is there peculiarly remarkable herein? Is it not equally remarkable that Ge. xlix. 10, and Da. ix. 27, and other passages, are not quoted and applied? There can be no doubt that all such passages were adduced by the apostles in their disputes with the Jews, and that they were among those with which Apollos 'mightily convinced' them, and by which they were 'confounded' by Paul; but why they should have been formally quoted and applied in the New Testament does not appear. . .

"Gesenius candidly observes that 'all the ancient interpreters have taken כארו as a verb; and this is certainly possible if we regard כָּאֲרוּ as the participle in Kal formed in the Chaldee manner, and in the plural number for כָּאֲרִים.' And he refers to two MSS. to prove that '*it was commonly held to be a verb.*' And in confirmation of this Vatablus declares that the ancient reading was twofold כָּאֲרוּ and כָּרוּ; while according to the testimony of Genebrard, the Jews continued to write כָּאֲרוּ in the margin and כָּאֲרוּ in the text until the six hundredth year of the Christian era, and then began to insert the marginal reading into the text itself; and finally to omit כָּאֲרוּ altogether.

"It is scarcely possible to overestimate the weight and importance of the evidence furnished by the versions in favour of our position that the word in question is a verb. The limits allotted to this review are not sufficient to permit us to go thoroughly into this branch of the argument; and we can therefore do but little more than glance at it. We begin with the Septuagint, the most ancient of all versions, it having been made probably in the third century before the Christian era, and by Jews who unquestionably understood their own language. Now these interpreters rendered the clause in question by ὤρυξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας, *they pierced my hands and feet.* If therefore the word in dispute was then regarded as a noun, how is this rendering to be accounted for? Can any one suppose that such a rendering would have been given in defiance of MSS., common sense, common honesty, and directly in the face of the knowledge of every one who could read Hebrew? and also without any assignable inducement whatever? If it was not done in defiance of these things, we apprehend that there is but one other alternative—*it was done in accordance with the MSS., common sense, and honesty.* Add to this the fact that the Greek fathers all translate the word in a similar manner. Justin,

in his dialogue with the shrewd and learned Jew Trypho, so translates it; so does the author of the *Questions to Antiochus*, Quest. 136, and Athanasius in his *Dialogue on the Trinity* and in his work on the *Incarnation*. Apollinaris, in his *Paraphrase*, thus renders it:

Ἡμετέρους ὤρυξαν ὁμοῦ χεῖράς τε, πόδας τε.

"The Latin interpreters likewise uniformly render it as a verb. So Tertullian in innumerable places. Cyprian also, in his second book of *Testimonies against the Jews*, renders it by *effoderunt*. In the old Latin version of the Psalms made by Jerome from the Hebrew with the utmost care, the word is translated also as a verb: '*Fixerunt* manus meas, et pedes meas.' Now to this version there is a preface addressed to Sophronius by Jerome, in which he most confidently declares that he has not departed from the strict sense of the Hebrew in a single word; and he calls upon the Jews to show, if they were able, one instance of such departure.[1] Now let the reader ask himself whether Jerome (or any other man of sense or integrity) could have thus challenged such a scrutiny, and in a case where so glaring an error would, to his shame and mortification, have been at once detected by his bitter opposers the Jews, if in such a well-known instance as the one before us he had been conscious of having corrupted the text? The supposition is out of all question. Jerome knew that the Jews had *fastened* Jesus to the cross, and the Jews knew also that they had thus fastened him by piercing his hands and feet; and they likewise knew that all Christians applied this passage to that transaction. And yet under such circumstances Jerome thus challenges their scrutiny, and defies them to come forward and show that he had mistranslated a single word! The conclusion seems irresistible, that כָּאֲרִי was either the reading of the then approved text, or כָּאֲרִי in Ps. xxii. was universally regarded as a verb.

"To all this may be added the strong fact that Aquila the Jew (a man of great industry, and thoroughly acquainted with Hebrew), who in the second century of the Christian era translated the Old Testament into Greek, renders the word not as a noun but verb; not indeed by ὤρυξαν, but by ὄρυσσειν, a word whose import in this connection (though Hengstenberg has strangely questioned it) involves the signification of *pierced*. At all events, he translates it as a verb, for this is the point before us. Here, then, was a most learned and eminent Jew thus translating from the approved text, or Kethibh of the Jews. What, then, must the reading of the Kethibh have been? Will any one say that it was כָּאֲרִי, and that this word is a noun? . . .

"There is one more consideration which certainly is of weight, and ought not to be overlooked in this connection. We refer to the following: In this same psalm everything else which our adorable Redeemer suffered while enduring the death of the cross is mentioned, and why then should not the piercing of his hands and feet be referred to? When in the deepest agony on the cross he repeated at least the first verse of the psalm.[2] In ver. 8, 9 he is represented as saying, 'All who see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him,' &c. In ver. 14, 'They gaped upon me with their mouths as a raging lion.' In ver. 16 he complains of thirst, and in ver. 19 says, 'They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture.' Is it credible, then, that no reference should have been made to the excruciating agony which he endured from the piercing of his hands and feet? If Dr. Alexander's exposition of the word in question be the true one, *then there is no direct reference to this matter in the whole psalm.* Can this be believed?

"Not less forcible than touchingly beautiful are the following words of Luther: 'To us who believe in Christ, and who hold by the authority of the gospel that this whole psalm was spoken concerning him, it is easy to perceive that the proper reading of the passage is, '*they have pierced* my hands and my feet,' instead of '*as a lion* my hands and my feet.' For we would not en-

[1] "His words are, 'Certè confidenter dicam, et multos hujus operis testes citabo, me nihil duntaxat sententiæ Hebraica veritate mutâsse;' and, a little further on, he adds, 'Interroga quemlibet Hebraeorum.'"

[2] "Osiander (Dr. Lucas) and others of ancient times believed that Christ repeated *the whole psalm* while hanging on the cross; 'creditur Christus hunc psalmum totum in cruce recitasse,' says he, an idea which Coleridge and others in modern times have adopted."

deavour by means of the mysteries of the Scriptures to explain the things which are known to have occurred; but on the contrary would clear up the mystery by a reference to such things; that is, we would illustrate the Old Testament by the New (and not the New by the Old), and would determine what is the sense of the former by the obvious import of the latter: thus making them both to look towards Christ, as the two cherubim looked towards the mercy-seat. For God said by the prophet (Je. xxiii. 30), '*In the last days* ye shall understand my counsel;' but to Moses he said, 'Ye shall discern only my hinder parts.' Since, therefore, we are assured that Christ's hands and feet were pierced, and are equally certain also that this whole psalm applies to him; and since the sense of the passage not only strikingly accords herewith, but absolutely demands that the word be read, '*they pierced*' (especially since no rule of grammar forbids it), we may, without violence, and with perfect propriety, adopt this as its proper signification.' *Comment. in Ps.* xxii."

27. *Shall remember.* Andrew Fuller, in an excellent sermon on this verse, thus remarks regarding the nature of true conversion:—"It is to remember. . . . Perhaps the first religious exercise of mind of which we are conscious is reflection. A state of unregeneracy is a state of forgetfulness. God is forgotten. Sinners have lost all just sense of his glory, authority, mercy, and judgment, living as if there were no God, or as if they thought there was none. And when God is forgotten, there is no proper remembrance of themselves. Their own evil ways attract little or no attention. They go on adding sin to sin, and think scarcely anything about them. Even if some threatening judgment should have affrighted them into vows and resolutions to amend their lives, no sooner is the cloud dissipated than all is forgotten. But if ever we are brought to be the subjects of true conversion, we shall be brought to remember these things. This divine change is fitly expressed by the case of the prodigal, who is said to have *come to himself*, or to his right mind. If we thus come to ourselves, we shall think of the holiness, goodness, and forbearance of God, and be troubled. And if we think of God, we shall not forget our own evil ways. We shall remember, and be confounded, and never open our lips any more. The Holy Spirit makes use of divers means in conversion; but they all operate to bring the sinner to reflection. Sometimes he works by adverse providences. Thus it was with Joseph's brethren. They sold their brother for a slave, and framed a lie to deceive their father; and more than twenty years had elapsed when they went down into Egypt to buy corn. There they were treated roughly, and put in ward as though they were spies. In this situation they remembered and reflected upon their evil ways: 'And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother.' Thus also Manasseh king of Judah, after a long life of the most awful wickedness, was reclaimed by an adverse providence. In the thorns of affliction he remembered the Lord God of his fathers, called upon his name, and obtained mercy. Frequently the Lord works by his word. In reading or hearing it, something lays hold of the heart; and the effect is the same. Peter's hearers (Ac. ii.) were brought to remember their evil doings, and to sue for mercy. We may read the Scriptures over and over, and hear hundreds of sermons, without any real profit, unless they operate in this way. If ever you hear to purpose, you will think but little of the preacher; your attention will be principally turned to yourselves. Sometimes, I believe, a sinner is converted without any apparent second cause. While sitting in his house, or walking by the way, his mind is insensibly drawn to think of its own evil courses: 'I thought on my ways,' says David, 'and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Whatever be the way in which we are brought, if it be by the word of God, we shall certainly be induced to remember those things which heretofore have been neglected and forgotten."

31. *He hath done this.* "The last word of our Saviour on the cross, τετέλεσται, evidently refers to this עשה, as His first exclamation is taken from the beginning of the psalm:—of all proofs of the profound significance of this whole thus bounded, this is the surest, giving, at the same time, the key to the variously misinterpreted word of our Saviour. According to this view, we are to regard *the work of God* as that which *was finished.* The last moment of suffering is the first of deliverance; and the expiring Saviour

here indicates that this is now at hand; that he has now received an answer, not in words but in deed, to the question, Why hast thou forsaken me? and that the morning dawn now succeeds the dark night. *The resurrection* certifies the exclamation: *It is finished.*"

The Hebrew is very elliptical. It seems as if עָשָׂה were here intentionally used in an absolute and indefinite way in order to fix our thoughts on the thing being done. A finger points to the scene, and a voice says, עָשָׂה, *q.d.* "*He has performed!*" Here is *deed*, not word only. Here is *fulfilment*, not promise only. The meek may eat and be filled! For lo! there is the thing done! performance of all that this psalm describes, of all that Jesus meant when he cried, "*It is finished.*" In that hour he saw his sufferings ended and his glory begun, and could proclaim victory through suffering. What a song of Zion is this! Messiah at every step! beginning with "Eli, Eli," and ending with τετέλεσται, "*It is finished.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

PSALM XXIII.

The delightful picture of domestic piety that imparts such a charm to the book of Ruth is a memorial of the manners prevalent among David's immediate ancestors, and of the benign and heavenly influences that blessed his infancy and boyhood. I do not suppose that the twenty-third psalm was written in the psalmist's childhood, but it is at least a reminiscence of it, and brings vividly before us the scenes and the feelings which his memory recalled when it reverted to the golden morning of his life. We have good reason to believe that the regenerating hallowing grace of God's free Spirit accompanied—if indeed it did not anticipate—the teaching and godly nurture he received from his parents.—*Binnie.*

David has left no sweeter psalm than the short twenty-third. It is but a moment's opening of his soul; but, as when one, walking the winter street, sees the door opened for some one to enter, and the red light streams a moment forth, and the forms of gay children are running to greet the comer, and genial music sounds, though the door shuts and leaves the night black, yet it cannot shut back again all that the eyes, the ear, the heart, and the imagination have seen—so in this psalm, though it is but a moment's opening of the soul, are emitted truths of peace and consolation that will never be absent from the world. The twenty-third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that psalm was born! What would you say of a pilgrim commissioned of God to travel up and down the earth singing a strange melody, which, when one heard, caused him to forget whatever sorrow he had? And so the singing angel goes on his way through all lands, singing in the language of every nation, driving away trouble by the pulses of the air which his tongue moves with divine power. Behold just such an one! This pilgrim God has sent to speak in every language on the globe. It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go too. Nor is its work done. It will go singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe, and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical for ever.—Beecher's *Life Thoughts.*

It has been said that what the nightingale is among birds, that is this divine ode among the Psalms, for it has

sung sweetly in the ear of many a mourner in his night of weeping, and has bidden him hope for a morning of joy. I will venture to compare it also to the lark, which sings as it mounts, and mounts as it sings, until it is out of sight, and even then is not out of hearing. Note the last words of the psalm—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" these are celestial notes, more fitted for the eternal mansions than for these dwelling-places below the clouds. Oh that we may enter into the spirit of the psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth!—*Spurgeon.*

It is unnecessary to refer this psalm to any particular period of David's history. As the outpouring of a heart which has found perfect rest in God, it was most probably written in advanced years, after a long experience of God's goodness. Its language is coloured by the reminiscences of his past life. His own shepherd experience no doubt suggested the image of the former part; and in the latter we may perhaps trace a recollection, more or less distinct, of the circumstances mentioned in 2 Sam. xvii. 27-29, when, on David's coming to Mahanaim, during Absaloms' rebellion, he and his party were succoured and refreshed in their faintness and weariness through the kindness of Barzillai and other friends, who supplied their wants.—*Perowne.*

Of all the figures that are applied to God in the Old Testament, that of a shepherd is the most beautiful. "The other names sound somewhat too gloriously and majestically, and bring, as it were, an awe and fear with them when we hear them uttered. This is the case when the Scriptures call God our Lord, King, Creator. This, however, is not the case with the sweet word *shepherd*. It brings to the godly, when they read it or hear it, as it were, a confidence, a consolation or security, like the word *father*. We cannot better understand this consoling and lovely word than by going to nature, and learning carefully from her what are the dispositions and the properties of the sheep, and what the duty, the labour, the care of a good shepherd. A sheep can only live through the help, protection, and care of its shepherd. As soon as it loses him it is exposed to dangers of every kind, and must perish, for it cannot help itself. The reason is, it is a poor, weak, silly creature. But, weak creature though it be, it has the habit of keeping diligently near its shepherd, of depending upon his help and protection; it follows wherever he leads, and, if it can only be near him, it cares for nothing, is afraid of no one, but feels secure and happy, for it wants for nothing."—*Luther.*

1. *The Lord is my shepherd.* I never ride over these hills, clothed with flocks, without meditating upon this delightful theme. Our Saviour says that the good shepherd, when he putteth forth his own sheep, goeth before them, and they follow. This is true to the letter. They are so tame and so trained that they *follow* their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages, just where he pleases. As there are many flocks in such a place as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice and follow on; but if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. This is not the fancy costume of a parable: it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly. The shepherd goes before, not merely to point out the way, but to see that it is practicable and safe. He is armed, in order to defend his charge; and in this he is very courageous. Many adventures with wild beasts occur not unlike that recounted by David (1 Sam. xvii. 34-36), and in these very mountains; for, though there are now no lions here, there are wolves in abundance; and leopards and panthers, exceeding fierce, prowl about these wild wadies. They not unfrequently attack the flock in the very presence of the shepherd, and he must be ready to do battle at a moment's warning. I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with these savage beasts. And when the thief and the robber come (and come they do), the faithful shepherd has often to put his life in his hand to defend his flock. I

have known more than one case in which he had literally to lay it down in the contest. A poor faithful fellow last spring, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, actually fought three Bedawîn robbers, until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars, and died among the sheep he was defending.—*The Land and the Book.*

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*, &c. This is but one of many beautiful passages of Scripture alluding to the practice of the eastern shepherds in leading their flocks from one region to another in search of green pasture. In winter and early spring the rains compel the roots and seeds of the desert to shoot, which in summer were kept down by excessive drought. But the moisture clothes the wilderness with verdure, and with the succulent and nutritive herbage on which the flocks luxuriate and prosper. And when the periodical drought returns to the wilderness, the shepherd leads off his flocks to the mountains, the streams, and the habitable districts, where herbage yet remains. Thus it is an important part of the eastern shepherd's character that he should possess such a knowledge of the country and its pasture-grounds as may enable him to move his flock from one point to another with the moral certainty of finding good pasturage in the place whither he is going. The bad, that is the ignorant shepherd, exposes his flock to the danger of perishing from hunger or fatigue: from hunger, if no pasture is found in the expected places; from fatigue, in hurrying the flock from one place to another, in the vague expectation of finding that which he knows not where to find.—*Pictorial Bible.*

4. *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* The shepherd invariably carries a staff or rod with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hands of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. With it, also, he corrects them when disobedient, and brings them back when wandering. This staff is associated as inseparably with the shepherd as the goad is with the ploughman. David has an extended reference to the shepherd and his kind offices, and among them is an allusion to this rod: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"—in every way in which these are employed by the good shepherd in the discharge of his office.—*The Land and the Book.*

5. *Thou anointest my head with oil.* This does not appear to refer to the regal anointing, but to the custom of anointing the head with oil and fragrant unguents on occasions of festivity and rejoicing. To anoint the head also was an honour paid to a distinguished guest; and, in Luke vii. 46, our Saviour seems to refer to the omission of it as rather inhospitable in his host, the Pharisee. The same customs as to anointing the head were in operation among the Greeks and Romans. At present, in Western Asia, people generally shave their heads, which has there put an end to these ancient usages. But they still subsist, more to the east, in India. "At their marriages and other festive times (says Roberts), the young and old may be seen with their long black tresses tied neatly on the crown of the head, shining and smooth, like polished ebony." The custom here alluded to is remarkably illustrated by a ceremony of which Captain Wilson describes himself as having been the object in India:—"I once had this ceremony performed on myself, in the house of a rich Indian, and in the presence of a large company. The gentleman of the house poured upon my hands and arms a delightful odoriferous perfume, put a golden cup into my hand, and poured wine into it till it ran over, assuring me at the same time that it was a great pleasure for him to receive me, and that I should find a rich supply in his house. I think the divine poet expressed his sense of the goodness of God by an allusion to this ceremony, or to one that very closely resembled it."—*Pictorial Bible.*

PSALM XXIV.

How far David himself recognized the prophetical import of his strains of praise, it is in the present instance difficult to determine. Yet in the whole Psalter there is hardly a psalm that can be regarded as more deeply prophetical than this. It is doubly prophetical. Alike portraying the characteristics of the true Israel, and celebrating the glory of Israel's God, it finds its perfect fulfilment in him who was himself at once both the one and the other, and whose ascension into heaven bore the double witness to his human obedience

and his divine glory. As our Saviour was by his spotless innocence the only perfect representation of Israel, so on the other hand was it only in his power that the full glory of God was manifested to the world. His victory over death and hell proclaimed him the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. His strength, infused by his Holy Spirit into the souls of his redeemed, proclaims him the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of the true Israel; a title the justice of which will be more completely vindicated when the redeemed shall themselves have accomplished their victory, and when, freed from all stain of sin, they shall ascend whither their King of glory is ascended before them. As God's covenant people of olden time were a type of all who should truly serve him, so the victories of Israel's God and of his chosen armies over the Philistine invaders, were types of the spiritual victory of God manifest in the flesh, and in him of his Christian redeemed.

But in connection with this must not be overlooked the prophecy implicitly involved in the first verse of the psalm of the catholicity of God's true Israel. It is perhaps too much to suppose that David ever foresaw that God would one day recognize the equal holiness of every nation upon earth; for although in examining Ps. xix. we have seen that he discovered a stumbling-block in the restriction to a single people of the knowledge of God's truth, yet his utmost and latest anticipations in this respect seem from Ps. lxvii. to have gone no further than this, that God's special mercies to Israel would become a blessing and a joy to the Gentile world. The use, however, which St. Paul has made of the first verse in 1 Cor. x. 26 leaves no doubt that had *he* had occasion to furnish a general exposition of this psalm, he would have recognized in it the prophetical import assigned to it above; nor does the silence of the psalmist, who from the sphere of ideas in which he had been educated was disabled from pushing his words to their full consequences, afford any just ground for questioning the legitimacy of the interpretation thus placed upon them.—*Thrupp.*

The coming of the Lord of glory, the high demands upon his people originating therein, the absolute necessity to prepare worthily for his arrival, form the subject-matter of the psalm. It admits of applications far beyond the special occasion which called it forth. The Lord may be conceived of as constantly coming, in relation both to his church collectively and to his people individually. And his people therefore ought to be continually preparing to give him a suitable reception. Hence it follows that the Messianic interpretation, which in former times was so very prevalent, has an important element of truth in it. The coming of God to his kingdom took place in a manner infinitely more real at the appearance of Christ than it did at the entrance of the ark of the covenant. That lower occurrence was only the *shadow*, but the *body* was in Christ. At this truly real coming, which has different gradations—the coming in humility, the coming in spirit, and the coming in glory—the *demands* rise in proportion to the greater reality. The question, "Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" becomes more solemn, and the command, "Lift up your heads, ye gates," is given in a louder tone.—*Hengstenberg.*

7–10. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates,* &c. We must now form to ourselves an idea of the Lord of glory, after his resurrection from the dead, making his entry into the eternal temple in heaven, as of old, by the symbol of his presence, he took possession of that figurative and temporary structure which once stood upon the hill of Sion. We are to conceive him gradually rising from Mount Olivet into the air, taking the clouds for his chariot and ascending up on high; while some of the angels, like the Levites in procession, attendant on the triumphant Messiah in the day of his power, demand that those everlasting gates and doors, hitherto shut and barred against the race of Adam, should be thrown open for his admission into the realms of bliss. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." On hearing this voice of jubilee and exultation from the earth, the abode of misery and sorrow, the rest of the angels, astonished at the thought of a man claiming a right of entrance into their happy regions, ask from within, like the Levites in the temple, "Who is this King of glory?" To which question the attendant angels answer, in a strain of joy and triumph

—and let the church of the redeemed answer with them—"The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;" the Lord Jesus, victorious over sin, death, and hell. Therefore we say, and with holy transport we repeat it, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And if any ask, "Who is the King of glory?" to heaven and earth we proclaim aloud—"The Lord of hosts;" all-conquering Messiah, Head over every creature, the Leader of the armies of Jehovah, "He is the King of glory." Even so, glory be to thee, O Lord most high! Amen. Hallelujah. —*Horne.*

Why is the song repeated? Why are the everlasting gates invited to lift up their heads a second time? We may not pretend here, or in any place, to know all the meaning of the divine Psalms. But what if the repetition of the verse was meant to put us in mind that our Saviour's ascension will be repeated also? He will not indeed die any more; death can no more have any dominion over him; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Neither of course can he rise again any more. But as he will come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead, so after that descent he will have to ascend again. And I say, this second ascension may be signified by the psalmist calling on the everlasting doors to lift up their heads a second time, and make way for the King of glory. Now observe the answer made this second time, "*Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.*" Before it was "*the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;*" now it is "*The Lord of hosts.*" Christ ascending the first time, to intercede for us at his Father's right hand, is called "*The Lord mighty in battle.*" But Christ, ascending the second time, after the world hath been judged, and the good and bad separated for ever, is called "*the Lord of hosts.*" Why this difference in his divine titles? We may reverently take it, that it signifies to us the difference between his first and second coming down to earth, his first and second ascension into heaven. As in other respects his first coming was in great humility, so in this, that he came, in all appearance, alone. The angels were indeed waiting round him, but not visibly, not in glory. "He trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him." He wrestled with death, hell, and Satan alone. Alone he rose from the dead: alone, as far as man could see, he went up to heaven. Thus he showed himself "the Lord mighty in battle," mighty in that single combat which he, as our champion, our David, victoriously maintained against our great enemy. But when he shall come down and go up the second time, he will show himself "the Lord of hosts." Instead of coming down alone in mysterious silence, as in his wonderful incarnation, he will be followed by all the armies of heaven. "The Lord my God will come, and all his saints with him." "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." "The Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels with him." "Thousand thousands will stand around him, and ten thousand times ten thousand will minister unto him." Instead of the silence of that quiet chamber at Nazareth, and of the holy Virgin's womb, there will be the voice of the archangel and the trump of God accompanying him. Thus he will come down as the Lord of hosts, and as the Lord of hosts he will ascend again to his Father. After the judgment, he will pass again through the everlasting doors, with a greater company than before; for he will lead along with him, into the heavenly habitation, all those who shall have been raised from their graves and found worthy. Hear how the awful sight is described by one who will doubtless have a high place in that day near the Judge. The great apostle and prophet, St. Paul, says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."—*Keble.*

PSALM XXV.

The first of the alphabetical or acrostic psalms; on which class of psalms Dr. Binnie remarks:—The alphabetical psalms—the *psalmi abcedarii*, as the Latin fathers called them

—are nine in number; namely, Psalms ix. and x., xxv. and xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi. and cxii., cxix., cxlv. Perhaps the two that stand first should be marked as doubtful, for the acrostic is very imperfect; but an alphabetical arrangement is distinctly traceable, beginning with the first verse of the ninth psalm, and running on to the end of the tenth, two verses generally going to each letter of the alphabet. The circumstance that the two psalms are linked together so as to form one acrostic poem will explain the fact, so unusual in the First Book, that Psalm x. is unfurnished with a superscription. Doubtless, both psalms are from David's pen.

The twenty-fifth and thirty-fourth, both "psalms of David," form a pair of another sort. They are identical in structure, each consisting of twenty-two verses, being one for every letter of the Hebrew alphabet; with this curious peculiarity (found in both psalms), that one letter—*Vau*—is awanting, and the number is made up by the addition of a supplementary verse, having for its initial letter *Pe*, which is thus used a second time.

The hundred and eleventh and hundred and twelfth constitute a third pair, corresponding the one to the other, both in structure and theme.

The thirty-seventh, a "psalm of David," consists of forty verses. The acrostic is complete, two verses generally going to each letter. In the hundred and forty-fifth, also ascribed to David, there are twenty-one verses—one for every letter except *Nun*, which, for some unknown reason, is lacking. The hundred and nineteenth, as is well known, contains two-and-twenty stanzas of eight verses each. As the acrostic dominates in every verse, each letter occurs eight times over.

This acrostic way of writing is not confined to the Psalms; it is found both in the Proverbs and Lamentations. The Eulogy of the Virtuous Woman (Prov. xxxi. 10–31) is a regular acrostic of twenty-two verses. So also are the first and second chapters of the Lamentations. In the third chapter, which is likewise a long acrostic, there are three verses to each letter, making sixty-six in all. If it should seem strange that the heart-broken prophet restrained the flow of lamentations uttered because of the desolation of Zion within the limits of such an artificial kind of verse, it may be worth while to refer to our poet-laureate's *In Memoriam*. The measure chosen seems at first intolerably monotonous for a long poem; nevertheless the poet finds it well suited to express the sadness and desolation of his heart.

I cannot help thinking it is a pity that, except in the single instance of the hundred and nineteenth, no hint of their existence should have been suffered to appear in our Authorized Version. I will not take it upon me to affirm, with Ewald, that no version is faithful in which the acrostic is suppressed; but I do think that the existence of such a remarkable style of composition ought to be indicated in one way or another, and that some useful purposes are served by its being actually reproduced in the translation. No doubt there are difficulties in the way. The Hebrew alphabet differs widely from any of those now employed in Europe. Besides differences of a more fundamental kind, the Hebrew has only twenty-two letters for our twenty-six; and of the twenty-two a considerable number have no fellows in ours. An exact reproduction of a Hebrew acrostic in an English version is therefore impossible. The divergence between the alphabets is so great that it seems vain even to follow in English the *order* of the Hebrew letters. Dr. Delitzsch has industriously made an attempt of the sort in his German version, but with little success. The only feasible method is to omit from our alphabet the four letters that are of least frequent use, and make the two-and-twenty that remain stand for the two-and-twenty letters of the Hebrew. This may not suffice to meet the demands of a pedantic accuracy, but it will exhibit to the English reader the structure of the original, which is all that I propose.—*Binnie.*

The only lesson which the use of the *alphabetic* form may teach is this: that the Holy Spirit was willing to throw his words into all the moulds of human thought and speech; and whatever ingenuity man may exhibit in intellectual efforts, he should consecrate these to his Lord, making him the "*Alpha and Omega*" of his pursuits.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

1. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.* It is not easy to do this. We are naturally sluggish and grovelling. Who has not reason to acknowledge

with shame and sorrow, "my soul cleaveth unto the dust?" It is easy enough, in duty, to lift up our hands, and our eyes, and our voices; but it is another thing to come even to his seat, to enter into the secret of his tabernacle, and to hold intercourse with the God of heaven. And yet, without this, what is devotion? And how unanswerable will all our services be to the requisition of him who is a spirit, and seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth! And without this a real Christian is no more satisfied than God . . . And this marks the spiritual worshipper. He is not distinguished by always enjoying liberty and fervour in his holy exercises; but he mourns the want of them. . . . It is the spirituality of religion that befriends enjoyment. Nothing yields us pleasure but in proportion as the heart is engaged in the pursuit. How dull and how tiresome are those tasks, in which

> "In vain to heaven we raise our cries,
> And leave our souls behind."

But it is good to draw *near* to God. Then there is a sacred charm that keeps our thoughts from wandering. Then we attend on the Lord without distraction. Then we feel no weariness of Spirit. We call the Sabbath a delight. We find his words, and eat them. And our meditation of him is sweet.

And when such a worshipper comes forth, he will be ready to say to all he meets, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And *his* recommendations are likely to have some effect. For his profiting will appear unto all men. His face shines. His heart speaks. His life speaks. His character speaks. He must be impressive and influential. He will be felt—in the family—in the church—and in the world. He cannot but do good, even without pretension, without effort—

> "When such a man, familiar with the skies,
> Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise;
> And once more mingles with us meaner things;
> 'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings—
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> Which tells us whence his treasures are supplied." —*Jay.*

16-18. *Turn thee unto me*, &c. Surely this book is addressed to the heart; and requires sensibility rather than talent to understand and explain it. How tender here is the language of David. And how instructive too. He was a sufferer, though a king and a man eminently godly. And his sorrows were not superficial, but deep and depressing—"the sorrows of the heart." And while hoping for their diminution, they were "enlarged." But he is a petitioner, as well as a sufferer; and those sorrows will never injure us that bring us to God. Three things he prays for. *First*, Deliverance. This we are allowed to desire, consistently with resignation to the divine will. But we must seek it not from creatures, but from God. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." *Secondly*, Notice. A kind look from God is desirable at any time, in any circumstances; but in affliction and pain, it is like life from the dead. Nothing cuts like the neglect of a friend in distress; nothing soothes like his calls and inquiries, and sympathies and tears. But to say—Thou, God, seest me:—to be assured that he is attentive to my condition and is smiling through the cloud; fills the heart, even in tribulation, with a peace that passeth all understanding. *Thirdly*, Pardon. Trials are apt to revive a sense of guilt. However the Christian may feel his sorrows, he will feel his sins much more. These, these are the burden, and the grief.

This was David's meaning; and I hope I can make it my own. If it be thy pleasure release me from my complaint. If not, and the distress is continued to try me, be near to afford me a sensible manifestation of thy favour; let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice saying, "I remember thee still." Or if this be denied, and I have no claim upon thee for such an indulgence, let me, for the Redeemer's sake, be absolved and justified. Remove my guilt, whatever becomes of my grief—grief *then* cannot be penal—cannot be injurious—

> "If sin be pardoned, I'm secure,
> *Death* hath no sting beside:
> The law gives sin its damning power;
> But Christ my ransom died."—*Jay.*

PSALM XXVI.

From the strength of the protestations of integrity and innocence here found, some have thought that this psalm must have its fulfilment in

Christ alone, and could not be at all applied to David. Fry's first remark is that "a psalm, commencing with a demand for justice at the tribunal of the Almighty, must necessarily belong to our righteous Advocate." Amyrald uses language nearly as strong. But Horne clears the matter sufficiently when he says that "we have here an appeal to God in behalf of injured innocence. . . . A trial of this sort might be desired by David, and may be desired by men, like him, conscious of their integrity as to the particular crimes charged upon them by the malice of their enemies. Christ alone could ask such a trial at large, as being equally free from every kind and degree of sin, and certain of receiving additional lustre from the increasing heat of the furnace." No doubt David, in his struggles for his crown and in the opposition of wicked men, was a type of Christ, and an example of all believers who should come after him. But under the charges brought against him, he would not do otherwise, if he spoke at all, than maintain his innocence.—*Plumer.*

1. *Judge me, O Jehovah.* A solemn appeal to the just tribunal of the heart-searching God, warranted by the circumstances of the writer, so far as regarded the particular offences with which he was wrongly charged. Worried and worn out by the injustice of men, the innocent spirit flies from its false accusers to the throne of Eternal Right. He had need have a clear case who dares to carry his suit into the King's Bench of heaven. Such an appeal as this is not to be rashly made on any occasion; and as to the whole of our walk and conversation, it should never be made at all, except as we are justified in Christ Jesus: a far more fitting prayer for a sinful mortal is the petition, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant."—*For I have walked in mine integrity.* He held integrity as his principle, and walked in it as his practice. David had not used any traitorous or unrighteous means to gain the crown, or to keep it; he was conscious of having been guided by the noblest principles of honour in all his actions with regard to Saul and his family. What a comfort it is to have the approbation of one's own conscience! If there be peace within the soul, the blustering storms of slander which howl around us are of little consideration. When the little bird in my bosom sings a merry song, it is no matter to me if a thousand owls hoot at me from without.—*Spurgeon.*

3. *Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes.* And it may be well to follow David; and to keep the loving-kindness of God before our eyes also. This should be done in four ways:—First, As a subject of contemplation. The mind will be active; and it is our wisdom to regulate and sanctify our thoughts. People complain of the difficulty they feel in fixing their minds: but the duty would become easier by use—and surely they never can be at a loss for a theme. Let them take his loving-kindness and set it before their eyes. Let them observe it as it appears in the promises of his Word; in the history of his church; in their own experience. Let them pass from the instances of his loving-kindness to the qualities of it. Let them dwell upon its earliness, and fulness, and extensiveness, and seasonableness, and constancy.—Secondly, As a source of encouragement. We shall feel our want of it under a sense of our guilt, and unworthiness, and continued imperfections. It will give us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; and boldness and access with confidence. We shall want it in our afflictions: nothing is so desirable in our sufferings as to see, not only the *hand*, but the *kindness* of God in them.—Thirdly, As an excitement to praise. It is afflicting to think how little the loving-kindness of God is acknowledged by those who are constantly partaking of it. How lamentable, says Leighton, is it, that a world so full of God's mercy should be so empty of his glory!—Lastly, We should keep his loving-kindness before our eyes as an example for our imitation. The Scripture calls upon us to be followers of God as dear children. And in what are we to resemble him? His moral, and not his natural perfections;—to be faithful as he is faithful—to be holy as he is holy—to be patient, and forgiving, and kind, like himself. You would do well to keep in view some of your fellow-creatures who feel that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Think of a Howard, a Thornton, a Reynolds. But God is love. We cannot equal him, but it is our happiness to resemble. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.—*Jay.*

6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* The threefold Jehovah of the section is so divided, that it opens it, and concludes it, and stands here in the first verse of the second strophe,—the strophe of the *ascent* from morality to piety. *The hands* are considered, in the first clause, as the instruments of action: *innocence* is the spiritual water; compare Ps. lxxii. 13, where *the washing of the hands in innocency* corresponds to *cleansing the heart;* Job ix. 30, where instead of *innocency* there stands "potash;" and De. xxi. 6, and Mat. xxvii. 34, where the hands were washed in protestation of innocence. The psalmist describes himself as one *integer vitæ scelerisque purus.—Hengstenberg.*

9. *Gather not my soul with sinners.* He that would not be found amongst sinners in the other world, must take heed that he do not frequent their company in this. Those whom the constable finds wandering with vagrants, may be sent with them to the house of correction. "Lord," said a good woman on her death-bed, when in some doubt of her salvation, "send me not to hell amongst wicked men, for thou knowest I never loved their company all my life long." David deprecates their future doom upon the like ground, and argueth it as a sign of his sincerity: "*I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked. . . O gather not my soul with sinners.*" Lord, I have not loved the wicked so well as to sit with them for a little time, and shall I live with them for ever? I have not lain amongst them rotting on the earth; and wilt thou gather my soul with those sticks for the unquenchable fire of hell? Lord, I have been so far from liking, that thou knowest I have loathed the congregation of evil-doers. Do not I hate them that hate thee? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred; and shall thy friends fare as thy foes? I appeal to thy Majesty, that my great comfort is in thy chosen. I rejoice only to be amongst thy children here, and shall I be excluded their company hereafter? "*O do not gather my soul with sinners,*" for the wine-press of thine eternal anger! Marcion, the heretic, seeing Polycarp, wondered that he would not own him. Do you not know me, Polycarp? Yea, saith Polycarp, "*Scio te esse primogenitum diaboli;*" "I know thee to be the first-born of the devil," and so despised him. —*George Swinnock.*

PSALM XXVII.

1. *Whom shall I fear?* The interrogation shows how highly David esteemed the divine protection, as he thus boldy exults against all his enemies and dangers; nor assuredly do we ascribe due homage to God, unless, trusting to his promised aid, we dare to boast of the certainty of our safety. Weighing, as it were, in scales the whole power of earth and hell, David accounts it all lighter than a feather, and considers God alone as far outweighing the whole.

Let us learn, therefore, to put such a value on God's power to protect us as to put to flight all our fears. Not that the minds of the faithful can, by reason of the infirmity of the flesh, be at all times devoid of fear; but immediately recovering courage, let us, from the high tower of our confidence, look down upon all our dangers with contempt. Those who have never tasted the grace of God tremble, because they refuse to rely upon him, and imagine that he is often incensed against them, or at least far removed from them. But with the promises of God before our eyes, and the grace which they offer, our unbelief does him grievous wrong, if we do not with unshrinking courage boldly set him against all our enemies. When God, therefore, kindly allures us to himself, and assures us that he will take care of our safety, since we have embraced his promises, or because we believe him to be faithful, it is meet that we highly extol his power, that it may ravish our hearts with admiration of himself. We must mark well this comparison, What are all creatures to God? Moreover, we must extend this confidence still farther, in order to banish all fears from our consciences, like Paul, who, when speaking of his eternal salvation, boldly exclaims, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"—*Calvin.*

4, 5. *One thing have I desired of the Lord,* &c. This (David's remarkable love for the tabernacle) was one of the strongly-marked features of his character. It impressed all who knew him, and, when he was gathered to his fathers, the generation that came after continued to speak with affection of "David and all his afflictions," all his anxious labours for the house of God—

how he lamented for the ark all the years it lay neglected at Kirjath-jearim —how he coveted its presence in his own city, as the fairest jewel in his diadem—how he pitched for it a tabernacle, and desired to build for it a temple. If David ever had a ruling passion, it was his zeal, his consuming zeal, for the house of God. He could say with rare truth, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." How strongly is this expressed in the twenty-seventh psalm:—

One thing have I desired of Jehovah,
That will I seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah,
All the days of my life;
To behold the beauty of Jehovah,
And to inquire in his temple.
For he shall conceal me in his tabernacle
In the day of evil:
He shall hide me in the hiding-place of his tent;
He shall set me upon a rock.

In David's position, and with his love for the tabernacle service, an uninspired poet would, to a certainty, have so framed his hymns that, however suitable to the typical dispensation, they would have become obsolete when the temple was given to the flames, and the cumbrous ritual, in which the fathers of the Old Testament worshipped God, was finally supplanted by a system of simple and spiritual ordinances. But David "spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost;" and, accordingly, in his character of psalmist, we may say of him, with Augustine, that "although he lived under the Old Testament, he was not a man of the Old Testament." He seized on the spiritual elements and aspects of the tabernacle service, and wove these alone into the fabric of his songs; so that when "the things that might be shaken" were removed, the Psalms were found to belong to "the things which could not be shaken," and remained fixed in the worship of the catholic church.

14. *Wait on the Lord.* Thirty years ago, before "the Lord caused me to wander from my father's house," and from my native place, I put my mark upon this passage in Isaiah, "I am the Lord: they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Of the many books I now possess, the Bible that bears this mark is the only one of them all that belonged to me at that time. It now lies before me; and I find that, although the hair which was then dark as night, has meanwhile become "a sable silvered," the ink which marked this text has grown into intensity of blackness as the time advanced, corresponding with, and in fact recording, the growing intensity of the conviction, that "they shall not be ashamed that wait for Thee." I believed it then; but I know it now; and I can write *probatum est* with my whole heart over against the symbol which that mark is to me of my ancient faith.

Looking back through the long period which has passed since I set my mark to these words—a period which forms the best and brightest, as well as the most trying and conflicting of all men's lives; it is a joy to me to be able to say, "I have waited for Thee, and have not been ashamed. Under many perilous circumstances, in many most trying scenes, amid faintings within and fears without, and under sorrows that rend the heart, and troubles that crush it down, I have waited for Thee; and, lo, I stand this day as one not ashamed."

Old scholars and divines were wont to write or paint up in their studies some favourite sentence from the sages of old, or some chosen text of Scripture. Those inclined to follow this custom could do no better than write up this one word, "WAIT." It is but a monosyllable; but it is fuller of meaning than any other word in the language, and it is applicable to all ages, and to all circumstances. At the first slight view, merely to "wait," seems so simple a thing, as scarcely entitled to be called a grace; and yet larger promises are made to it than to any other grace, except to faith; and hardly, indeed, with that exception, for the grace of "waiting" is part of the grace of faith,—is a form of faith,—is, as some would describe it, an effect of faith; or, more strictly, one of its most fruitful manifestations.—Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations.*

PSALM XXVIII.

The contents of the psalm throughout apply very well to David during the time of Absalom's rebellion, when, to all appearance, the design of God was that the lots of the righteous and the wicked should be exchanged; the people were brought into danger on account of the king; and the enemies especially were those who "spoke peace to their neighbours, while mischief was in their hearts." But, in the absence of all

special historical circumstances, it is in the highest degree probable that the design of David in composing the psalm, was to draw out a form of prayer, grounded on his own experience at this time, for the use of his successors who should walk in the footsteps of his righteousness: compare Ps. xviii. 50. If this be the case, it is manifest, at the same time, that the psalm in reality possesses a didactic and hortatory character:—the righteous king, in a time of severe trouble, desires to set before his eyes the righteous judgment of God, which will not permit the righteous to be involved in the lot of the wicked, nor the wicked to go unpunished; to be calm and composed in dependence on this; and to wait with confident expectation for the help of God. This didactic tendency is particularly obvious in the fifth verse, where the form of address to God is abandoned.

The assertion of Ewald and Hitzig, that the portion from the 6th to the 9th verse was first written after the danger had gone past, is based on the false idea that the psalm has an individual character; proceeds from mistaking the nature of the transitions in the psalm; and overlooks the truth, that faith is the substance—the ὑπόστασις—of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1.—*Hengstenberg.*

1. *Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me*, &c. When we pray aright we will be concerned to get an answer in peace. Whoever leaves his prayer as the ostrich leaves her egg in the sand, and cares no more for it, does not pray at all. When Elijah prayed for rain, he sent his servant to "look toward the sea," to see if it was coming. Scott: "While others are troubling their fellow-creatures with unavailing complaints, believers should, under distresses, cry the more earnestly 'to the Rock of their salvation:' and they should not rest till they have received some satisfactory token that their prayers are heard; for if the Lord could refuse to answer them, their case would resemble that of those who have perished in their sins, to whose agonizing cries no gracious answer will be made for ever." Men can be in no worse state than to be where prayer is not heard.—*Plumer.*

PSALM XXIX.

Expositors have spoken confidently, yet diversely, as to the occasion of this psalm. Clarke: "It was probably written to commemorate the abundant rain which fell in the days of David, after the heavens had been shut up for three years, 2 Sa. xxi. 1-10;" Patrick: "This psalm seems to have been composed by David after some extraordinary great thunder, lightning, and rain: whereby (it is probable) God had so discomfited his enemies, and put their forces into such disorder, that he easily got the victory over them." With him agrees Dodd, who cites attention to the history given in 2 Sa. viii. in illustration. Pool favours the same view; and Morison mentions it with respect. Mudge is decidedly of the same opinion.

After his return from Palestine, M'Cheyne gave to Dr. James Hamilton of London an interpretation of this psalm, drawn from the natural scenery and the course of storms in the mountains of that land. . . . He says that in this psalm "the strength of Jehovah is celebrated, and the exemplification of it is evidently taken from a thunderstorm in Lebanon." Whatever may be thought of the correctness of this view, none can read either of these writers (M'Cheyne or Hamilton) without being struck with the exceedingly great beauty of the illustrations offered, and of the exquisite taste displayed in the method of presenting it.

But Hengstenberg says, "There is no ground for the idea that the psalm was occasioned by the sight of a thunderstorm. 'The freshness of the painting, the vigorous conceptions, and the rapid transition of the whole,' will give rise to this view only when low ideas are entertained of the power of poetry;" Alexander: "The superficial notion that this psalm is merely a description of a thunderstorm, or of Jehovah as the God of thunder, may be corrected by observing that the last verse gives the key-note to the whole composition."—*Plumer.*

It seems to be the general opinion of modern annotators, that this psalm is meant to express the glory of God as heard in the pealing thunder, and seen in an equinoctial tornado. Just as the eighth psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright; as the nineteenth needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk

which heralds the war of elements. The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of his presence. The word of God in the law and gospel is here also depicted in its majesty of power. True ministers are sons of thunder, and the voice of God in Christ Jesus is full of majesty. Thus we have God's works and God's words joined together; let no man put them asunder by a false idea that theology and science can by any possibility oppose each other. We may, perhaps, by a prophetic glance, behold in this psalm the dread tempests of the latter days and the security of the elect people.

The first two verses are a call to adoration. From ver. 3—10 the path of the tempest is traced, the attributes of God's word are rehearsed, and God magnified in all the terrible grandeur of his power; and the last verse sweetly closes the scene with the assurance that the omnipotent Jehovah will give both strength and peace to his people. Let heaven and earth pass away, the Lord will surely bless his people.—*Spurgeon.*

The 29th Psalm surpasses all descriptions of a thunderstorm, including those of Lucretius, Virgil, and Byron, admirable as all those are. That of Lucretius is a hubbub of matter; the lightning is a mere elemental discharge, not a barbed arrow of vengeance; his system will not permit a powerful personification. Virgil's picture in his Georgics is superb, but has been somewhat vulgarized to our feelings by many imitations, and the old commonplaces about "Father Jove and his thunderbolts." Byron does not give us that overwhelming sense of unity which is the poetry of a thunderstorm—cloud answers to cloud, and mountain to mountain; it is a brisk and animated controversy in the heavens, but you have not the feeling of all nature bowing below the presence of one avenging power, with difficulty restrained from breaking forth to consume—of one voice creating the sounds—of one form hardly concealed by the darkness—of one hand grasping the livid reins of the passing chariot—and of one sigh of relief testifying to the feelings of gratitude on the part of nature and of man—when, in the dispersion of the storm, the one mysterious power and presence has passed away. It is this godhood of thunder which the Hebrew poet has expressed, and no other poet has. Like repeated peals, the name of the Lord sounds down all the 29th Psalm, solemnizing and harmonizing it all. . . . Thus are all the phenomena of the storm—from the agitated waters of the sea to the crashing cedars of Lebanon—from the depths of Bashan's forest, bared to its every fallen leaf, and every serpent's hole, in the glare of the lightning, to the premature calving of the hind—from the awe of the quaking wilderness, to the solemn peace and whispered worship of God's people in his temple—bound together by the name and presence of God as by a chain of living fire,—

> "When science, from creation's face,
> Enchantment's veil withdraws,
> What lovely visions yield their place
> To cold material laws."

True, but not merely *lovely*, but dreadful visions recede before the dawn of science; while the rainbow becomes less beautiful, the thunder becomes less sublime. But this poet seems not to feel, that, when science reaches its noonday, those visions shall return, for, indeed, they are something better than mere visions. The thunder, after all, *is* the voice of God. Every particle of that tempest is an instant emanation from a present Deity. Analyze electricity as strictly as you can, the question recurs, "What is it, whence comes it?" and the answer must be, From an inconceivable, illimitable power behind and within those elements—in one word, from God.—Gilfillan's *Bards of the Bible.*

3. *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.* The "Jehovah" of the first clause is supplemented in the second, and the "water" in the third. Thunder is "the voice of the Lord" only for believers. An ungodly Hebrew would assuredly not consider it as such. Every gentle breath of air is also the voice of the Lord: all nature proclaims his glory: God speaks in everything to men. But because our ears are dull of hearing, that especially is called his voice by which he speaks in loudest tones, and proclaims to us, in spite of all unwillingness on our part to hear, his omnipotence and his majesty. The "waters" are the clouds, "the waters which are above the firmament," Gen. i. 7; "the dark waters," Ps. xviii. 11; "the multitude of waters,"

Jer. x. 13: compare Ps. lxxvii. 17; Job xxxvi. 28. Several interpreters apply the term to the waters of the sea and rivers. But the word "many," in the last clause, is decisive against this: it shows that the waters form a part of the storm itself; for only in this case is their multiplicity of importance to the object in view, inasmuch as it serves to bring forward the greatness of God in the storm. The designation of God as "the God of glory," points back to ver. 1, 2, and shows that the description which begins in our verse, serves as a basis to the exhortation which is there addressed to the angels to praise the glory of God.—*Hengstenberg.*

David selects only those works of God which prove not only that the world was at first created by him, and is governed by his power, but which also awaken the torpid, and drag them, as it were, in spite of themselves, humbly to adore him; as even Horace was compelled, though he was not only a heathen poet, but an Epicurean and a vile contemner of Deity, to say of himself in one of his odes,—

"A fugitive from heaven and prayer,
I mocked at all religious fear,
Deep sciened in the mazy lore
Of mad philosophy; but now
Hoist sail, and back my voyage plough
To that blest harbour which I left before.

"For, lo! that awful heavenly Sire
Who frequent cleaves the clouds with fire,
Parent of day, immortal Jove;
Late through the floating fields of air,
The face of heaven serene and fair,
His thund'ring steeds and winged chariot drove," &c.
—*Hor. lib.* 1, *ode* 34, *Dr. Francis' Trans.*

Experience, too, tells us that those who are most daring in their contempt of God are most afraid of thunderings, storms, and such like violent commotions. With great propriety, therefore, does the prophet invite our attention to these instances which strike the rude and insensible with some sense of the existence of a God, and rouse them to action, however sluggish and regardless they are. He says not that the sun rises from day to day and sheds abroad his life-giving beams, nor that the rain gently descends to fertilize the earth with its moisture; but he brings forward thunders, violent tempests, and such things as smite the hearts of men with dread by their violence. God, it is true, speaks in all his creatures, but here the prophet mentions those sounds which rouse us from our drowsiness, or rather our lethargy, by the loudness of their noise. We have said that this language is chiefly directed to those who, with stubborn recklessness, cast from them, as far as they can, all thoughts of God. The very figures which he uses sufficiently declare, that David's design was to subdue by fear the obstinacy which yields not willingly otherwise. Thrice he repeats that God's voice is heard in great and violent tempests, and in the subsequent verse he adds, that it is full of power and majesty.—*Calvin.*

10, 11.

Jehovah sate throned above the flood:
Yea Jehovah sitteth throned a King for ever.
Jehovah giveth strength to his people.
Jehovah blesseth his people with peace.

FLOOD, *i.e.* the Deluge. The word here employed (מַבּוּל) occurs nowhere else, except in the story of the flood (Gen. vi.—xi.), and therefore refers, I cannot help thinking, to that great act of judgment, and not merely to a recent inundation caused by the storm, the mountain-torrents having been swollen by the rain, and having flooded the country. This might have happened. But the selection of so peculiar a word, as well as the fact that the verb is in the past tense, "*sate* throned," makes the other more probable.

Very beautiful is the conclusion of the psalm. If, in his heavenly temple above, all that are therein ascribe "glory" to God, upon earth too he manifested that glory. He sat as a King when he sent the flood of water to destroy the earth. He sits now, and for ever will sit, as King. As then he saved the righteous man from death, so now he watches over his people: for Jehovah is the God of Israel. It was he who, when the storm waxed strong, gave it its strength; it was he who, when it was hushed, spread over earth, and sea, and sky, the sweet Sabbath stillness of peace. And he whose almighty power was seen in the march of the tempest, whose voice was heard in its wildest uproar, and whose word stilled its fiercest war, shall he not give both strength and peace? Yea, Jehovah who is strong and mighty, will give his own strength to his people. And he who is the Prince of Peace will bless his people with peace. Thus the psalm begins, as Delitzsch says, with a *Gloria*

in excelsis, and ends with a *Pax in terris.—Perowne.*

PSALM XXX.

Title. A psalm. A song of dedication (for) the house. By David. The construction, *house of David*, although not ungrammatical, is forced, as that idea would, according to usage, have been otherwise expressed in Hebrew. This construction has moreover given rise to the false notion, that the psalm has reference to the king's own dwelling, whereas *the house*, as an absolute phrase, can only mean the house of God. The historical occasion of the psalm is furnished by the narrative in 2 Sa. xxiv. and 1 Ch. xxi. David's presumption in numbering the people had been punished by a pestilence, which raged until the destroying angel had, in answer to the king's prayer, been required to sheathe his sword. The spot where this indication of God's mercy had been given, was immediately purchased by David, and consecrated by the erection of an altar, upon which he offered sacrifices and received the divine approbation in the gift of fire from heaven (1 Ch. xxi. 26). This place the king expressly calls the house of God (1 Ch. xxii. 1), either in the wide sense of the patriarchal *Bethel*, or as the designated site of the temple for which he immediately commenced his preparations (1 Ch. xxii. 2), and in reference to which this psalm might well be called a *song of dedication*, although naturally more full of the pestilence, and the sin which caused it, than of the sanctuary yet to be erected.—*J. A. Alexander.*

4. *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Memory in this connection does not mean the power, or the act of remembering, but that which is remembered when we think of God, to wit, his glorious perfections, which are summed up in his *holiness.—J. A. Alexander.*

Since the fall, this attribute, which renders God so amiable in himself, and which draws forth the highest praises of heaven, makes him unlovely to an apostate creature. There is nothing the sinner thinks of with so much dislike as a perfection that justifies all his fears, and opposes all his inclinations and pursuits. What an enemy the world naturally is to the holiness of God may be seen in the practice of the heathens. Among all the heroes they deified, they advanced none for those qualities which approach the most nearly to it; but frequently for passions the most remote from it; and at best only for some physical power, valued, or useful in the concerns of this life. Esculapius was deified for his skill in curing diseases. Bacchus for the use of the grape. Vulcan for his operations in fire. Hercules for his destroying monsters. But not one of them all was advanced to this honour for the virtue of holiness, as if this property was beneath their notice in the formation of a deity; or they loved a god better that had nothing to do with it. It was upon this principle that they who are now saints "would" once themselves have "none of him;" and really said unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." What a blessed evidence is it in their favour that they can now "glory in his holy name;" and "sing and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness!" But such is the change they have experienced that they do contemplate him with pleasure as holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. It is a relief, a satisfaction to their minds in every perplexity in nature or providence, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. They delight in the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, after the inward man. The gospel appears to their minds glorious, "because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This attribute now smiles upon them. They have a vast interest and hope in it. As he is holy they can depend upon his truth; and are assured of the fulfilment of his word. They know that he who has said, "I will abundantly pardon," "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," is a God that cannot lie. Yes, says the Christian, since he who loves me is purity itself, and his influence is almighty, he will sprinkle clean water upon me, and *I* shall be clean. He will destroy in me the sin which he infinitely hates. He will make me a *partaker* of his holiness, and render me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

6. *In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.* The deepest insight into the dangers of prosperity, and the necessity which thence arises for affliction, had previously been exhibited in the *law:* compare, for example, Deut.

xxxii. 15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation:" but especially Deut. viii. 11–18, where almost every word agrees exactly with the case before us: "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and thine heart be lifted up, and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth; but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth." Besides Israel (compare Hos. xiii. 16, "According to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me") and David, we have in the Old Testament a remarkable example of the dangers of prosperity in the case of Hezekiah, who stood so nobly when in adversity. These dangers are not only incident to worldly prosperity, but are also to be dreaded in a season of spiritual enjoyment. J. Arnd says: "Behold! we have here a very affecting warning in the example of beloved David, which should teach us to fear God during our days of prosperity, and never to be confident, or to put our dependence on earthly things. How did the prophets preach against the mighty kings and nations in their prophecies against Babylon and others! All those mighty nations, cities, and kings who depended on their own might and riches, have been broken and laid waste, and levelled with the ground; while, on the other hand, all who acted humbly, feared God, and cherished a sense of dependence on his grace, have been maintained, and shall continue to exist for ever. The sentence also is to be understood in a spiritual sense: many a one is so strong in faith, so spiritually minded, so joyful, so full of confidence, that he bids defiance to the devil and the world, and says, with David, "I will not fear though hundreds of thousands were encamped against me." But when our beloved God tries us a little, when he withdraws from us his grace, O then all is over with us, and we are ready to sink into hell, and to give up all for lost. This God does, that we may become acquainted with our own weakness, and may know that we are entirely dependent on divine grace." The Berleb. Bib.: "A change is necessary, in order that the soul may be brought to know that its firmness is entirely dependent on the strength which *God* has imparted. If its beautiful day had no evening, if its sun were never darkened, the soul would infallibly ascribe all to its own power and care. But as soon as God withdraws his sensible co-operation, evening and darkness destroy its beautiful day: and it then knows that everything comes from this source and sun, and that everything proceeds from the will of God, and through the working of his grace, without any merit on our own part at all."—*Hengstenberg.*

9. *Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?* It sounds harsh to speak of a misconception of the state of the soul after death, in connection with the name of David, as our author does in his comment on this verse. The true sense seems to be given by himself in the following sentence:—When he says that whatever we are to do for making known God *on earth*, must be done ere we descend to the grave (Ps. vi. 5; lxxxviii. 10, 12; Is. xxxviii. 18, 19). On the whole subject of the state of knowledge in early times on the future world, the reader is referred to the editor's preface in the first volume on Job.

Calvin *in loco* says, By inquiring in the end of the verse, *Shall the dust praise thee?* he does not mean that the dead are altogether deprived of power to praise God. If the faithful, while encumbered with a burden of flesh, exercise themselves in this pious duty, how should they desist from it when they are disencumbered and set free from the restraints of the body? It ought to be observed, therefore, that David does not professedly treat of what the dead do, or how they are occupied, but considers only the purpose for which we live in this world, which is this, that we may mutually show forth to one another the glory of God. Having been employed in this exercise to the end of our life, death at length comes upon us, and shuts our mouth.

PSALM XXXI.

The psalmist in dire affliction appeals to his God for help with much confidence and holy importunity, and ere long finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for his great goodness. Some have thought that the

occasion in his troubled life which led to this psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone and its allusion to his iniquity demand a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumours against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.—*Spurgeon.*

2. *Bow down thine ear to me.* Condescend to my low estate; listen to me attentively as one who would hear every word. Heaven with its transcendent glories of harmony might well engross the divine ear, but yet the Lord has an hourly regard to the weakest moanings of his poorest people.—*Spurgeon.*

5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* Our Lord uttered these words on the cross, and this circumstance led many of the old expositors to apply the whole psalm directly to the Messiah. Huss repeated frequently on the way to the stake the words:—"Into thine hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, my Lord Jesus, God of truth."

Upon the expression of confidence in the power and faithfulness of God, follows the expression of the singer's resolve. *My spirit* (*ruach*), more than my *soul* or *life* (*nephesh*). It is not only from sickness and death, but from sin and all ghostly enemies, that the man of God would be kept, and therefore he commends to God, not his body or his bodily life alone, but the life of his spirit, which is more precious (compare Is. xxxviii. 16, "life of my spirit"). *I commend* (παρατίθεμαι), *i. e.* place as a *deposit*, intrust. With these words our Lord breathed out his life, Lu. xxiii. 46, as he had before used words from another psalm in his agony on the cross. The first words were from a psalm (Ps. xxii.) which, typically at least, foreshadowed his sufferings; whereas this is not in the same way prophetical. But the Holy One of God, in that last hour of mortal agony, chose these words of one of his servants to express the solemn surrender of his life. And in so doing he gave them a new interpretation. The Jewish singer only meant by them that he put himself and all his hopes into the hands of God. Jesus meant by them, that *by his own act, of his own free will*, he gave up his spirit, and therewith his life, to the Father. Observe how the evangelists carefully choose their expressions: ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα, Matt.; παρέδωκεν τὸ πν., John. And they who have died with their Lord have died with the same words on their lips. These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, Melancthon, and many others. "Blessed are they," says Luther, "who die not only *for* the Lord, as martyrs, not only *in* the Lord, as all believers, but likewise *with* the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, 'Into thy hand I commend my spirit.'"—*Perownc.*

David again declares his faith to God, and affirms that he had such high thoughts of his providence as to cast all his cares upon it. Whoever commits himself into God's hand and to his guardianship, not only constitutes him the arbiter of life and death to him, but also calmly depends on him for protection amidst all his dangers. The verb is in the future tense, "I will commit," and it unquestionably denotes a continued act, and is therefore fitly translated into the present tense. It is also to be observed that no man can possibly commit his life to God with sincerity but he who considers himself exposed to a thousand deaths, and that his life hangs by a thread, or differs almost nothing from a breath which passes suddenly away. David being thus at the point of despair, leaves nothing to himself to do but this—to go on his way, trusting in God as the keeper and governor of his life. It is marvellous that, although many things distress us all, scarcely one in a hundred is so wise as to commit his life into God's hand. Multitudes live from day to day as merry and careless as if they were in a quiet nest, free from all disturbance; but as soon as they encounter anything to terrify them, they are ready to die for anguish. It thus happens that they never betake themselves to God, either because they deceive themselves with vain delusions, flattering themselves that all will yet be well, or because they are so stricken with dread and stupified with amazement, that they have no desire for his fatherly care. Farther, as various tem-

pests of grief disturb us, and even sometimes throw us down headlong, or drag us from the direct path of duty, or at least remove us from our post, the only remedy which exists for setting these things at rest, is to consider that God, who is the author of our life, is also its preserver. This then is the only means of lightening all our burdens, and preserving us from being swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. Seeing therefore that God condescends to undertake the care of our lives, and to support them, although they are often exposed to various sorts of death, let us learn always to flee to this asylum; nay, the more that any one is exposed to dangers, let him exercise himself the more carefully in meditating on it. In short, let this be our shield against all dangerous attacks,—our haven amidst all tossings and tempests,—that although our safety may be beyond all human hope, God is the faithful guardian of it; and let this again arouse us to prayer, that he would defend us and make our deliverance sure. This confidence will likewise make every man forward to discharge his duty with alacrity, and constantly and fearlessly to struggle onward to the end of his course. How does it happen that so many are slothful and indifferent, and that others perfidiously forsake their duty, but because, overwhelmed with anxiety, they are terrified at dangers and inconveniences, and leave no room for the operation of the providence of God?—*Calvin.*

7. *Thou hast known my soul in adversities.* God owns his saints when others are ashamed to acknowledge them; he never refuses to know his friends. He thinks not the worse of them for their rags and tatters. He does not misjudge them and cast them off when their faces are lean with sickness, or their hearts heavy with despondency. Moreover, the Lord Jesus knows us in our pangs in a peculiar sense, by having a deep sympathy towards us in them all; when no others can enter into our griefs from want of understanding them experimentally, Jesus dives into the lowest depths with us, comprehending the direst of our woes, because he has felt the same. Jesus is a physician who knows every case; nothing is new to him. When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us, and will know us: O for grace to know more of him!—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XXXII.

Most commentators suppose that David composed this psalm when he obtained forgiveness from God after his adultery with Bathsheba, and the death of Uriah, to which that sin led. The correctness of this view can scarcely be called in question. That the case represented in ver. 3 is no *fiction*, but *a reality*, is clear as day. The psalmist speaks in language far too definite of himself and of a particular case, to allow us to regard the matter as a fiction. Now, if the matter be a reality, no other circumstances can be referred to, except those above mentioned. All the characteristic features agree exactly. Here, as there, it is none of the common *sins of infirmity* that are spoken of, but a *dreadful transgression*, yea, an assemblage of dreadful transgressions: compare the expression in the 5th verse, "I will confess *my crimes* to the Lord," in which respect the transgression of David with Bathsheba, and the accompanying circumstances, are said to hold a peculiar place in the history of David, 1 Ki. xv. 5. Here, as there, we have a long continuance of impenitence: according to ver. 3, "the bones of the psalmist waxed old *continually;*" according to ver. 4, "the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him *day* and *night;*" and, according to the history, there elapsed nearly a whole year between the sin of David and the repentance. Here, as there, we have a sudden *transition:* confession of sin at once breaking out, and forgiveness immediately following. Compare ver. 5, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou didst take away the guilt of my sin," with 2 Sa. xii. 13, "And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, The Lord forgiveth thy sin, thou shalt not die."—The reasons which have been adduced to show that the historical account given in Samuel is not wholly in accordance with the psalm, are easily set aside. David, it is said, according to that account, did not confess his sin, but had it brought before him by Nathan. But, even according to Samuel, David *did confess* his sin; and the circumstance that his confession was called forth by Nathan's address, did not detract from its character as a voluntary act. David must

have arrived, within his own mind, even at the very threshold of repentance; otherwise the address of Nathan would not have produced the effect which it did. Nathan did not *originate* the confession, he only *set it loose*. In what other way can we explain the fact, that Nathan postponed the discharge of his duty towards the king for such a length of time after the sin was committed, except by assuming that he waited, according to the direction of God, for the crisis in David's mind? Inasmuch, therefore, as the address of Nathan occupied only a subordinate place, and was not the *ground*, but merely the *occasion* of David's confession, David might very well pass it over in silence in this psalm, in the same way in which he does in the 51st Psalm, which refers to the same circumstance. *Again*, stress is laid upon the circumstance, that the writer of this psalm is joyful at having obtained deliverance from the *punishment* of his sin, with which he had already been visited (ver. 6 and 7); whereas in 2 Sa. xii. David obtained forgiveness previous to the infliction of the punishment. But the punishment in deliverance from which the psalmist rejoices, is not one with which he had been already visited, but one which he dreaded, with which he was threatened,—one present, indeed, in the view of conscience, which already saw the angel with the flaming sword approaching, but in reality yet future. In ver. 6 it is said that "the floods shall not *reach* to the godly who prays at the right time to God for forgiveness of sin," but not that "they shall *turn* away from him;" and in ver. 7, the preceding clause, "Thou preservest me from *trouble*," leads us to consider the "songs of deliverance," as songs called forth by deliverance from *threatened* danger. Now, David had been visited with anxiety in regard to future punishment after his adultery with Bathsheba. Nathan's words, 2 Sa. xii. 10, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me and taken the wife of Uriah," would not have produced such a dreadful impression on his mind, had not his conscience, before this, distinctly and repeatedly made the same announcement.

It has been frequently maintained that this psalm stands in opposition to the general point of view of the Old Testament. "It teaches inward reconciliation with God through faith; whereas, according to the theocratic view and practice, reconciliation is outward, and obtained by sacrifice." But there cannot be produced, out of the whole Old Testament, one single passage in which the doctrine that sacrifices of themselves, and apart from the state of mind of the offerers, are well-pleasing to God, is advanced, except for the purpose of vigorously opposing it. The law of Moses disowns this doctrine with complete decision. When, for example, in Le. xxvi. 31, it is said in reference to the ungodly, "I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours;" and when, in Ge. iv. 4, 5, we find that, along with an outward similarity, the offerings of Cain and Abel met with such different receptions from God, and that this difference is traced back to a difference in the persons; it is all but expressly asserted that sacrifices are regarded only as expressive of the mind within. Moreover, how could any such importance be attached to sacrifices, considered as such, when the value of all that man does is so repeatedly and so decidedly represented as dependent on his love to God? Compare Beitr. P. iii. p. 611. Now, just as *sacrifices* do not exclude *faith*, but faith is rather the *soul* of sacrifices, so faith does not exclude sacrifices. It is not a matter of any consequence, that David should have made no reference to them in this psalm, inasmuch as, although generally available in the case before us (compare on this Ps. li.), they occupy in every instance a very subordinate place.—*Hengstenberg.*

This is the second of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called, "which," says Selnecker, "St. Augustine used often to read with weeping heart and eyes, and which before his death he had written on the wall over against his sick-bed, that he might exercise himself therein, and find comfort therein in his sickness." St. Augustine's own words, "intelligentia prima est, ut te noris peccatorem," might stand as its motto.—*Perowne.*

Title, MASCHIL. There is yet another word, of frequent occurrence in the superscriptions, which claims a moment's notice. I refer to the term *Maschil*, which is prefixed to thirteen psalms. Our translators have not ventured to do more, in the *text*, than simply print the word in English characters; in the *margin*, however, they

render it, as the Geneva version had done before them, "to give instruction." It would be going too far to affirm that this interpretation is subject to no doubt. Some good Hebraists take exception to it; so that perhaps our venerable translators did well to leave it untranslated. Still the interpretation they have set down in the margin, as it is the most ancient, so it is sustained by the great preponderance of authority.[1] It agrees remarkably with the contents of the 32d Psalm, which affords the earliest instance of its use; for that psalm is pre-eminently didactic. Its scope is to instruct the convicted soul how to obtain peace with God and be compassed about with songs of deliverance. The title, although prefixed only to a few, is less or more applicable to all the psalms. It holds forth as one of the purposes they were designed to serve, the edification of souls in the truth and ways of the Lord. It is true, as we may afterwards have occasion to show, that there is very little *revelation*, strictly so called, in this part of the divine word—little disclosure of new truth to the church. The psalter is rather the response of the church to God's revelations elsewhere made, than itself the vehicle of new revelations. But it is a very instructive response. Many, many a time has it happened that the psalms learned by a child at his mother's knee have deposited in his heart the seeds of divine knowledge, and kept them alive till they have sprung up long after in a harvest of salvation. The psalms, then, besides being songs and hymns, are designed "to give instruction."—*Binnie.*

2. *Imputeth not iniquity*, &c. "The true idea of justification is that a man, although he is a sinner, is treated as though he had not committed sin or as if he were innocent." But God treats no man as righteous without a sufficient ground for so doing; and the ground is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. We are accepted "only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." The author's views on imputation are somewhat peculiar, and have already been fully discussed by us in the supplementary notes on Rom. i. 17; iii. 24; iv. 3, 5; Gal. ii. 16, to which the reader is referred. We need scarcely add that it is an unhappy way of speaking to say that the "act of pardon does not change the *facts* in the case, or *make him innocent*, but it makes it proper for God to treat him *as if* he were innocent." It is not the act of pardon that makes the divine conduct in this matter "proper," but the righteousness of Christ, on which both the pardon and the subsequent treatment must for ever rest.—ED.

The apostle's way of interpreting the text is remarkable. Finding David celebrating the *non-imputation of iniquity*, he construes this to mean the *imputation of righteousness*. Some have made bold to challenge the legitimacy of the construction, and have contended that the apostle quotes David's words by way of accommodation. But the interpretation is strictly correct. For what are the sins whose non-imputation is so gratefully celebrated? Are they the man's positive transgressions only? his sins of commission? That cannot be. For in that case the non-imputation would still leave the man under the ban of God's holy law. A sin of omission may sink a soul in perdition as surely as a sin of commission. "Inasmuch as ye did it *not*," will be the word of condemnation to many in the great day (Mat. xxv. 45). It must therefore be the non-imputation of all sins, of either kind, that David celebrates. Now, if God impute to a man neither his transgressions of the law, nor his omissions of duty, he treats him as a man who has fulfilled all righteousness; which is just to say, that he imputes to him righteousness without works (compare Chalmers' *Lectures on Romans*, at chap. iv. 6).

And this brings out very clearly the nature of the benefit which the Scriptures celebrate under the title of justification. It is forgiveness, and it is something more. When a pardon comes down from the crown to some condemned felon, it cancels the sentence and opens the prison door; but there its effect ceases. It does not restore the wretch to his former standing in society. He is a marked man for life. Very

[1] The LXX. and Vulgate are ambiguous, but Jerome in his version from the Hebrew renders it *eruditio*; and in this he is followed by the modern translators generally. Of recent critics, Gesenius and Hengstenberg render it *a didactic song*, Hupfeld *a doctrine* or *instruction*, and Delitzsch *a pious meditation*. Ewald and Mr. Perowne take the meaning to be, *a skilfully composed song*, *ein feines Lied*, and refer to Ps. xlvii. 7, where the same term is rendered "*with understanding*."

different is the effect of the pardon God bestows on those who, trusting in his mercy, confess their sins. They are *justified* by their faith. For Christ's sake they are treated as righteous persons,—as persons who had perfectly obeyed the law. God imputes to them righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ in whom they trust. Well, it is to be observed, that although the ground of justification is not plainly declared in the Psalms,—could not be plainly declared till Christ died,—the truth of justification is distinctly revealed. And, as I said before, this truth, which comes up in the shape of a clear articulate statement in the thirty-second Psalm, underlies all the rest. The voice which makes itself heard in the songs of God's Israel, is not the voice of a prodigal who has been forgiven merely, and suffered to take a place among the servants of his father's house.—*Binnie.*

Imputeth. The word rendered *impute* first denotes the *reckoning, counting,* or imputing to men that which is supposed to be properly their own. Thus in Gen. xxxviii. 15; 1 Sa. i. 13; 2 Sa. xix. 19; "When he saw her he *thought* her to be an harlot;" "Eli *thought* that she had been drunken;" "Let not my Lord *impute* iniquity unto me." The word is used in the same sense in Lev. xvii. 4; Neh. xiii. 13, and elsewhere. It has this proper signification here. Then it signifies that there is reckoned, counted, imputed to one something which did not belong to him previous to such reckoning or imputation. So it is used in Num. xviii. 27: "And this your heave-offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fulness of the wine-press." See also Lam. iv. 2, and many other places. In the first case we regard and treat persons according to what they *personally* are; in the second, according to what they *relatively* are. To impute sin in the first sense "is to charge guilt upon the guilty in a judicial way, with a view to his being punished for it." To impute sin in the second sense, is to hold one liable in law for the acts of his representative. The doctrine of the Old and New Testaments on this point is the same. Thus Paul prayed that the sin of those who had deserted him might not be laid to their charge, 2 Tim. iv. 16. Here we have the word in its first sense. And in Phile. 18, we have it in its second sense: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on my account." In all these cases the Hebrew and Greek words are those we render *impute.* God may and does charge upon the guilty their own sins; he may and does impute to Adam's posterity the sin of their federal head; he did impute to Christ the sins of his people; and he may and does impute to believers the righteousness of Christ. In all these cases the Scripture is clear, and the testimony and teaching of orthodox Christians is almost unvarying. The clause under consideration speaks of the *non-imputation* of sin. To *impute iniquity,* is to charge iniquity in condemnation, and to act accordingly. *Not to impute* sin is just the opposite. It is to remit the offence, pardon, forgive, absolve the sinner, cast his sins behind the back so as not to see them, bury them in the sea, remove them out of sight, blot them out so that they rise not in judgment to condemn him.—*Plumer.*

4. *The drought of summer.* We are not to suppose that the psalmist alludes to any season of extraordinary drought, but to the *ordinary* heat and dryness of the summer—to which the most extraordinary drought of our own summers cannot be compared. Near rivers and other sources of natural or artificial irrigation, verdure and beauty are preserved; but as no rain falls, the verdure of the unwatered plains soon disappears under the intense warmth of the season;—every flower fades, and every green thing withers; and a brown and arid desert alone remains, the parched herbage of which crackles beneath the feet of those who walk. A little rain, when it comes in its season, produces an equally rapid and marked change of an opposite character.—*Pictorial Bible.*

PSALM XXXIII.

A song of praise intended to excite and to express the confidence of Israel in Jehovah, and closely connected with the didactic psalm before it, the closing sentiment of which is here carried out. This intimate relation of the two psalms may account for the absence of a title in the one before us, as in the case of the ninth and tenth.—*Alexander.*

The psalm, along with the one before it, forms one pair. The chief reason for adopting this view is, that the psalm *begins* in the same strain as that with which the preceding one *concludes,* namely, an exhortation to rejoice in the

Lord: there, *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart:* here, *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright.* It is impossible to explain this circumstance by the supposition, that the collector of the Psalms placed the two together on account of the accidental resemblance between the concluding verse of the one, and the opening verse of the other. For the transition from the particular to the general in Ps. xxxii. takes place in such a striking and sudden manner, as to suggest the idea, that it was intended to prepare the way for passing on to a psalm of a general character. Another reason is, the want of a title in our psalm, though standing in the middle of an assemblage of psalms which are all designated psalms of David. This appearance met us in Ps. x., where we found strong reasons for regarding it and Ps. ix. as forming one pair. . . .

From these remarks, our view of the relation of the two psalms to each other will be as follows. David, inwardly and deeply moved by the proof of the glory of God, which he had obtained in the forgiveness of his dreadful offence, begins with praising it, in its present special manifestation. But his heart is so full, that he cannot be confined to this, but must take a wider range. He must unfold to Israel all that he has *generally* in God, especially God's protection and help against a hostile world. —*Hengstenberg.*

7. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together*, &c. He separated the *water* from the *earth;* and while the latter was collected into continents, islands, mountains, hills, and valleys, the former was collected into *one place*, and called *seas;* and by his all-controlling power and providence the waters have been retained in their place, so that they have not returned to drown the earth: and he has so adapted the *solar* and *lunar influence* exerted on the waters, that the tides are only raised to certain heights so that they cannot overflow the shores, nor become dissipated in the atmospheric regions. In this one economy there is a whole circle of science. The quantity of matter in the sun, moon, and in the earth are all adjusted to each other in this astonishing provision: the *course* of the *moon*, and the *diurnal* and *annual revolutions of the earth*, are all concerned here; and so concerned that it requires some of the nicest of the Newtonian calculations to ascertain the laws by which the whole is effected. —*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

PSALM XXXIV.

Title. A psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in 1 Sa. xxi. Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do, who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king, or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well-carved memorials: God deserves our best handiwork. David, in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.

Division.—The psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of verse 10, when the psalmist, having expressed his praise to God, turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are *a hymn*, and the last twelve *a sermon.* For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus: In verses 1 to 3 David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from 4 to 7 he relates his experience; and in 8, 9, 10 exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In verses 11–14 he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from verses 15 to the close.—*Spurgeon.*

1. *I will bless the Lord at all times*, &c. It has frequently been observed

as a most beautiful and appropriate circumstance in the life and experience of David, the man of God, that the first notes of his harp should give forth praises at the very time "when he changed his behaviour (*i.e. concealed his intellect*, or disguised his reason) before Abimelech, who sent him away and he departed." Cast out again, homeless, friendless, helpless, David trudges along the highway of Philistia, with the world all before him, where to choose his place of rest; and though he knows not where to lay his head, he journeys on, singing, "I will bless the Lord! I will bless him at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."—*A. A. Bonar.*

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.* Here we see that we may glory in him, though we are forbidden to glory in creatures, or in ourselves. . . And there are moments and frames when, surveying him in his works and perfections and promises, the believer can exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "What a friend have I! . . . What a shepherd! . . . What a God! . . . What a portion!"—*Jay.*

13. *Keep thy tongue from evil. Keep, hold back, restrain, vigilantly guard, preserve.* The same word is applied to *keeping* the commandments, *keeping* covenant, *keeping* the law, *keeping* the heart. This ought to be easy work; but sin has made it very difficult, and without divine grace, impossible, Ja. iii. 2–10. Yet we may not on that account be excused from our duty, Ja. i. 26. The ways in which men sin with the tongue are many. Laurentius says there are as many sins of the tongue as there are letters in the alphabet. Richard Baxter has catalogued thirty. Perhaps no form of sin more terribly destroys personal, domestic, social, and public peace and prosperity. "The tongue is a fire." It burns all who abuse it. It burns them up. Dreadful plagues befall it here and hereafter, Ps. lii. 5; cxx. 4. The two forms of sinful speaking noticed in the verse are *evil* and *guile.* The latter word is elsewhere in our version rendered *deceit, subtlety, treachery, craft*, and several times *guile. Evil* elsewhere *mischief, wickedness, wrong* Hengstenberg: "In giving the details of the fear of God, the duties toward our neighbour are, according to David's usual way, dwelt upon with particular care, because there hypocrisy, which is so ready to appropriate to itself premises with which it has nothing to do, finds least scope for its exercise."—*Plumer.*

PSALM XXXV.

The psalmist, sorely distressed by malicious and ungodly enemies, prays the Lord for deliverance, promising cordial thanks if his prayer should be granted. The psalm falls into three strophes, in each of which the three elements of complaint, prayer, and promise of thanksgiving, are contained, and which are especially remarkable on this account, that each of these runs out into the vow of thanksgiving, ver. 1–10; ver. 11–18; ver. 19–28. The middle strophe, surrounded on each side by two decades, in which prayer predominates, is chiefly remarkable for an extended representation of the psalmist's distress, and of the black ingratitude of his enemies, which calls aloud for the divine retribution.

The relations of David's time manifestly form the ground of this psalm, which was composed, according to the superscription, by him. A more special ground may be obtained in 1 Sa. xxiv. 15, where a declaration of David to Saul is recorded, "The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand,"—which coincides with the first verse of our psalm in very characteristic expressions. Still we are not to suppose, on this account, that the psalm possesses an individual character: what at first sight appears to carry this aspect, is soon perceived, by an experienced judgment, to be a mere individualizing. David speaks in the person of the righteous, from which view it is more easily explained how the truly Righteous One could appropriate this psalm to himself (Jn. xv. 25, comp. with ver. 19 here), an application, which led many of the older expositors to give to the psalm a direct and exclusive Messianic interpretation (comp. on the other hand, Introd. to Ps. xxii.) A casual synchronism between this psalm and the immediately preceding one is indicated by the agreement which ver. 6 and 7 present, the more remarkable as these two psalms are the only ones in which the Angel of the Lord, in a general way, occurs. But in both he appears entirely in the same character and connection.—*Hengstenberg.*

Like Psalm xxii., which it very

strongly resembles, Psalm xxxv. divides itself into three portions or strophes. . . . Nor is it only in its formal arrangement that this psalm thus resembles Psalm xxii. The ideal picture of the suppliant's distress in the second portion of the psalm is hardly less minutely and literally prophetical of the sufferings of our blessed Saviour than the picture in the corresponding portion of the great psalm of the crucifixion; though obscurities or ambiguities of translation, coupled with the fact of its being but once quoted in the New Testament (Jn. xv. 25), have rendered its details less familiar to Christian ears. The principal difference between the two psalms, prophetically regarded, is this, that whereas the prophecies of the one were literally verified in the scene of the crucifixion, those of the other found their literal fulfilment in the story of the condemnation. And this diversity of prophetical import is in perfect harmony with the difference between the fundamental burdens of complaint in the respective psalms. In Psalm xxii. the suppliant bewails his utter wretchedness; in Psalm xxxv. (probably composed at an earlier period) he only protests against the injustice to which he is submitting: in the one his God has forsaken him; in the other the Lord is still looking on, though forbearing as yet to redress his wrongs: "Be not thou far from me" is the prayer of the one; that of the other, "Plead thou my cause." Nor are the insults of the adversaries described in the latter psalm of so extreme a kind as those of the destroyers depicted in the former.

We may briefly run through the principal features in the picture which the psalmist has drawn. First of all, in ver. 11, we have the false witnesses rising up, laying to the suppliant's charge things that he knew not. And here, in order that we may once more beware of laying overmuch stress on the mere literal verification of the prophecy, let us observe that the false witness borne against Christ in the high-priest's palace, was but a type of that which the world is ever bearing against the doctrine and church of Christ, consisting, as it does, not in pure invention, but in a slight though all-important perversion of the truth. The next point in the description is the bitterness with which the suppliant's adversaries render him evil for good, yea even to depriving him of his life. We at once call to mind the persistency with which the multitude demanded of Pilate that Jesus should be crucified; and we may remember that among this very multitude there were probably some of those who had been present at the raising of Lazarus. And as regards the suppliant's former outpourings of love (ver. 13, 14) toward them that now persecuted him:—although the general spirit of loving-kindness here portrayed, not the details in which it manifested itself, be the point of real importance—still may we not reverently regard the mortal flesh which our Lord, the blessed Son of God, assumed (a mortal flesh of no form nor comeliness, of no beauty that men should desire him) as a sackcloth with which he was indeed clothed for the sicknesses and corruptions of the whole human race? May we not think of his long fasting for us in the wilderness? or of the many prayers which he must have urged for those who would not be saved, but which, failing of their immediate purpose, returned into his own bosom? May we not profitably call to mind how he had behaved himself to even his false apostle as to a very brother? How he had saluted him as friend, even at the very moment that he was betraying him? Or how he had wept, even as one that mourneth for his mother, over the approaching desolation of Jerusalem, whose children, had she only been willing, he would so often have gathered together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? But from the records of his love we must return to the contemplation of his sufferings. In ver. 15 we read, "They have gathered themselves together upon me, smiters, and I know not;" *i.e.* "They have gathered themselves together upon me, to smite me, and to rejoice in the ignorance I display of the authors of each indignity that I suffer." St. Matthew's account of what passed in the high-priest's palace will supply us with the literal verification of these words: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" Lastly, ver. 16 may be thus rendered: "While I am profaned with fictitious mockeries, they gnash upon me with their teeth;" and we have thus another yet more forcible prophecy of the deep hatred and the blasphemous affectation of scorn with which Christ

should be treated when once in the power of his adversaries. . . . The prophecy was afterwards followed up by Isaiah, l. 6: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Here the mockery of justice which has been perpetrated comes to a head; and the picture is abruptly terminated, as at Ps. xxii. 19, by an earnest entreaty to God to advance to his servant's rescue. That rescue was vouchsafed when at the resurrection Christ was "*justified* in the Spirit."—*Thrupp.*

3. *Say unto my soul*, &c. Some expound these words thus: Declare to me by secret inspiration; and others, Make me to feel indeed that my salvation is in thy hand. In my opinion, David desires to have it thoroughly fixed in his mind, and to be fully persuaded that God is the author of his salvation. This he was unable, from the present aspect of things, to ascertain and determine; for such is the insensibility and dulness of our natures, that God often delivers us whilst we sleep and are ignorant of it. Accordingly he makes use of a very forcible manner of expression, in praying that God would grant him a lively sense of his favour, so that being armed with this buckler, he might sustain every conflict, and surmount every opposing obstacle; as if he had said, Lord, whatever may arise to discourage me, confirm me in this persuasion, that my salvation is assuredly in thee; and although temptations drive me hither and thither, recall my thoughts to thee in such a manner as that my hope of salvation may rise superior to all the dangers to which I shall be exposed; nay more, that I may become as infallibly certain as if thou hadst said it, that through thy favour I shall be saved.—*Calvin.*

5. *Let them be as chaff*, &c. Under the influence of inspiration, the psalmist sees the natural and righteous consequences of their wickedness, and viewing the case merely in itself, apart from personal feeling, speaks of this effect as desirable. The wish expressed is, to all intents and purposes, equivalent to a prediction or the affirmation of a general truth. The psalmist desires the destruction of these sinners precisely as God wills it; nor is it any harder to reconcile the certain fact that God allows some men to perish in his infinite benevolence.—*Alexander.*

14. *As one that mourneth for his mother.* This indication is particularly impressive, as illustrated by the existing state of feeling of sons towards their mothers in the East. The relations between the father and the son in early life are not calculated to call forth the tender feelings of the latter in any very eminent degree. The father is looked up to distantly; is respected, venerated, but seldom loved. The restraint and deference which characterize his limited intercourse with his father, direct all his tender affections with double force towards his mother; whose indulgence and attachment towards him are so continually evinced, as enable her to establish an influence over him which seldom terminates but with her life. He constantly turns to her with perfect confidence on all occasions in which his feelings are interested; he usually commits to her the choice of his wife or wives; and when he settles in life she commonly takes the charge of his domestic establishment, becomes the real head of his household, and remains his nearest counsellor and friend, as she had been in his childhood. This station is the highest object of woman's ambition in the East. It is as a mother, not as a wife, that she attains the most independent and honoured station to which the condition of society allows her to aspire; and this it is, principally, which makes a woman in the East so anxious to have male children, and so comparatively indifferent about daughters; and this also induces the mother to exert herself in every possible way to fix and cultivate her son's affection, and in which she seldom fails so to succeed that "to bow down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother," would at once be understood by an Oriental as expressing the utmost profundity of grief.—*Kitto.*

PSALM XXXVI.

Ps. xxxvi. stands in nearly the same relation to Ps. xxxv. as Ps. xxiii. to Ps. xxii. Its connection with the preceding psalm appears in this, that while in the one the worshipper had prayed God to plead his cause, he makes in the other particular reference to God's faithfulness and righteousness; and while in the former it was as the Lord's *servant* that he had specially implored protection, he expressly bestows upon himself that title in the superscription of the latter. His concluding prayers,

moreover, in reference to his adversaries, coincide with those to which he had previously given utterance. Furthermore, as the language used by David to Saul at Engedi contained the substance of the petition in Ps. xxxv., so in the specious words with which Saul replied to David's remonstrances we find the basis of the sentiments ascribed to the wicked man in the opening of Ps. xxxvi.; as was noticed even by Theodoret. A similar view seems to have been taken by Bossuet, who prefixes to the psalm this heading: "Impiorum, qualis erat Saül, profunda malitia . . ." And to the occasion of the meeting at Engedi the psalm has been also referred by the Arabic translator. Indeed one might feel that in penning ver. 3 David mourned only too truly over the alteration which the indulgence of evil passions had produced in his father-in-law's once noble character. Leaving off to be wise and to do good, Saul was now condescending to iniquity and deceit; and had probably been devising mischief on that very bed on which he had been found asleep, and had been spared by the man whom he himself desired to slay.

A further proof of the occasion on which the psalm was composed, may be traced in the striking coincidence of its imagery with the natural features of the scenery round the fountain of Engedi, situate in a solitary oasis amidst a barrier of naked limestone precipices on the western bank of the Dead Sea. . . .

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALM.—It begins by setting forth that SIN, speaking as an oracle to the wicked in his innermost heart, exerts a more powerful influence upon him than the terrors of God, which can only address him from without; and that like a false and deceitful prophet, making things smooth to him in his eyes, it prevents him from detecting his own iniquity and hating it. In contrast to this blindness which the wicked has brought upon himself is the ever-increasing light which is enjoyed by the righteous. We are thus led to the main theme. It is only the servant of the Lord, who drinks of the true fountain of life, and sees light in God's light, that can really appreciate or experience the Lord's mercy. He alone can discern God's lovingkindness speaking to him in all the varied scenes of nature around: he alone can call that lovingkindness his own, and can entreat, with the prayer of faith, that it may be still continued to him. With such an entreaty, and with a prophecy of the discomfiture of the wicked, the psalm concludes.—*Thrupp.*

1. *The transgression of the wicked.* His daring and wanton sin; his breaking the bounds of law and justice. *Saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.—*Spurgeon.*

2. *For.* Here is the argument to prove the proposition laid down in the former verse. David here runs over the process of reasoning by which he had become convinced that wicked men have no proper idea of God or respect for him. God-fearing men see their sins and bewail them; where the reverse is the case we may be sure there is no fear of God. *He flattereth himself in his own eyes.* He counts himself a fine fellow, worthy of great respect. He quiets his conscience, and so deceives his own judgment as to reckon himself a pattern of excellence; if not for morality, yet for having sense enough not to be enslaved by rules which are bonds to others. He is the free-thinker, the man of strong mind, the hater of cant, the philosopher; and the servants of God are, in his esteem, mean-spirited and narrow-minded. Of all flatteries this is the most absurd and dangerous. Even the silliest bird will not set traps for itself; the most pettifogging attorney will not cheat himself. To smooth over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own path to hell.

The descent to eternal ruin is easy enough, without making a glissade of it, as self-flatterers do. *Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.* At length he is found out and detested, despite his self-conceit. Rottenness smells sooner or later too strong to be concealed. There is a time when the leprosy cannot be hidden. At last the old house can no longer be propped up, and falls about the tenant's ears: so there is a limit to a man's self-gratulation; he is found out amid general scorn, and can no longer keep up the farce which he played so well. If this happen not in this life, the hand of death will let light in upon the covered character, and expose the sinner to shame and contempt.—*Spurgeon.*

7. *How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.* Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated *excellent* may be rendered "precious;" no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. Kings' regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercy of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes *How excellent!* because he cannot tell us the half of it. *Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.—*Spurgeon.*

8. *Thy house.* The house of God is here neither, as some absurdly expound, the world, which is never so named, nor is it, as others suppose, a mere image of a divine storehouse; but it is here, as everywhere else, the national sanctuary, the tabernacle of meeting, in which the servants of the Lord spiritually dwell with him, and where they are tenderly cared for by him as the good householder. Comp. on Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; xxiv. 3; xxvii. 4, 5; lxv. 4. Michaelis, correctly as to the sense: ecclesiae tuae. For the house of God was the image of the church. To it belong the treasures of salvation, of which God makes his people to partake.—In the second member there seems to be a reference to Gen. ii. 10, "And a river went out from Eden (delight) to water the garden," which is also alluded to in Jn. iv. 18; Eze. xlvii.; Zec. xiv. 8—passages in which the thought, the whole earth shall partake of the blessings of the kingdom of God, is represented under the image of a stream, which, issuing from Jerusalem, refreshes the dry and barren region around. Comp. Christol. P. II. p. 367. In the stream which of old watered the garden of Eden for the good of man, the psalmist saw the type of that stream of bliss with which God's love never ceases to refresh his people.—*Hengstenberg.*

12. *There are the workers of iniquity fallen.*—Here he derives confidence from his prayer, not doubting that he has already obtained his request. And thus we see how the certainty of faith directs the saints to prayer. Besides, still further to confirm his confidence and hope in God, he shows as it were, by pointing to it with the finger, the certain destruction of the wicked, even though it lay as yet concealed in the future. In this respect the adverb *there* is not superfluous; for while the ungodly boast of their good fortune and the world applaud them, David beholds by the eye of faith, as if from a watch-tower, their destruction, and speaks of it with as much confidence as if he had already seen it realized.—*Calvin.*

PSALM XXXVII.

This is another of the acrostic or alphabetical psalms. Dr. Binnie regrets that the existence of this remarkable style of composition is not indicated in our English translations; and he presents the English reader with a translation of the opening part of the thirty-seventh Psalm, constructed on the principle of exhibiting the Hebrew peculiarity to an English eye:—

1. At evil-doers fret not thyself,
   At workers of iniquity be thou not envious.
2. For like the grass they shall soon be cut down.
   And like the green herb they shall wither.

3. But trust thou in Jehovah and do good;
   Inhabit the land and feed on faithfulness.
4. Delight thyself also in Jehovah;
   And he shall give thee the petitions of thine heart.

5. Commit to Jehovah thy way;
   Trust also in him, and he will effect it.
6. Yea, he shall bring out, as the light, thy righteousness,
   And thy judgment as the noonday.

7. Dumb be thou before Jehovah, and wait patiently for him;
   Fret not thyself at him who prospereth in his way,
   At the man who practiseth plots.

8. Evermore desist from anger and forsake wrath;
   Fret not thyself, only to do evil.
9. For evil-doers shall be cut off;
   But those that wait upon Jehovah, they shall inherit the land.

10. For yet a little while, and the wicked is not:
    Yea, thou shalt consider his place, and he is not there.
11. But the meek shall inherit the land,
    And shall delight themselves in abundance of peace.

12. 'Gainst the righteous the wicked plotteth,
    And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13. The Lord shall laugh at him,
    For he seeth that his day will come.

1. *Fret not thyself*, &c. "How immediately does the prophet seize and hit upon the thoughts of the heart in this temptation, and take away all causes thereof, saying, at the first: O man, thou art angry, and hast cause for it, as thou thinkest, for there are wicked men who do unjustly, and commit much evil, while still they continue to prosper, so that nature thinks it has just cause to be angry. But not so, dear child; permit grace, and not nature here to rule; break thine anger, and be at rest for a little; let them go on doing evil and prospering; believe me it shall do thee no harm. Then if men ask: When shall things cease to be thus? Who can endure so long? He answers: For as the grass, &c. This is a beautiful similitude, terrible to hypocrites, and consoling to the afflicted. How entirely does it raise us out of our own sight, and place us in the sight of God! In our sight the multitude of hypocrites flourishes and grows, and covers the world so completely that they alone seem almost to exist; as the green grass covers and adorns the earth. But in God's sight what are they? Hay, that must presently be made; and the higher the grass grows, the nearer is it to the scythe and the haycock; even so the higher and farther the wicked spread and rise aloft, the nearer are they to destruction. Wherefore then shouldst thou be angry, when their wickedness and prosperity are of so short-lived a nature?"—*Luther.*

6. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light*, &c. See holy David, Saul with all his kingly might could not destroy him. God brought David forth at last as a shining light, as the sun at noon-day; and what a bright light was David over the whole land! How thick a darkness fell upon our Lord Christ, the Sun of righteousness, in his holy sufferings and death; but in his glorious resurrection and ascension to heaven, and proclamation of the blessed gospel, the true light burst forth, and illuminated the whole earth, so that even the heathen walk in this light, and in the brightness which has proceeded from him.—*John Arndt.*

18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever.* Everything here requires attention. The *persons*—"the upright." The upright mean those who are sincere; sincere in their dealings with their fellow-creatures, with their own souls, with their God. The character is equally rare and excellent. It admits of imperfection, but not of partiality; and is never found separate from the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The *period*—"their days." These are "known of

God." This knowledge being spoken of as a privilege, something more than mere intelligence must be intended. The meaning is, he knows them kindly and graciously; that he feels and will acknowledge his concern in them; and make them all work together for their good. He knows their number: he has appointed it: friends cannot enlarge, enemies cannot reduce it. He knows the nature of them—and he determines it. Have they days of affliction? He knows them: knows their source, their pressure, how long they have continued, the support they require, and the proper time to remove them. Have they days of danger? He knows them, and will be a refuge and defence in them. Have they days of duty? He knows them, and will furnish the strength and help they require. Have they days of inaction, when they are laid aside from their work by accident or disease? He knows them, and says to his servants, under every prevention, "It is well that it was in thy heart." Have they days of privation, when they are denied the ordinances of religion? He knows them, and will be a little sanctuary to his people in their losses. Have they days of declension and of age, in which their strength is fled and their senses fail, and so many of their connections have gone down to the dust—evil days, wherein they have no pleasure? He knows them, and says, "Even to old age I am he, and to hoar hairs will I bear and carry you." The *portion*—"their inheritance shall be for ever." So was not the inheritance of many of the angels in heaven; for they kept not their first estate. So was not the inheritance of Adam in Paradise; for the Lord drove out the man. So was not the inheritance of the Jews in Canaan; for the glory of all lands was made a desolation. So is not the inheritance of the man of the world; his portion is in this life. And what is this but a vapour, a shadow? Yet at the end of it he is stripped of all, and departs as naked as he came. But the Christian has not only being, health, riches, honour, peace, joy, friendship; but all these for ever.—*Jay.*

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* This was David's observation. It is not *my* observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common mendicants. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David. He lived under a dispensation more outward and more of this world than the present rule of personal faith. Never are the righteous forsaken; that is a rule without exception. Seldom indeed do their seed beg bread; and although it does occasionally occur, through dissipation, idleness, or some such causes on the part of their sons, yet doubtless it is so rare a thing that there are many alive who never saw it. Go into the union house and see how few are the children of godly parents; enter the jail and see how much rarer still is the case. Poor ministers' sons often become rich. I am not old, but I have seen the families of the poor godly become rich, and have seen the Lord reward the faithfulness of the father in the success of the son, so that I have often thought that the best way to endow one's seed with wealth is to become poor for Christ's sake. In the Indian mission of the "Baptist Missionary Society" this is abundantly illustrated.—*Spurgeon.*

35. *I have seen the wicked in great power,* &c. A second time David turns to his diary, and this time in poetic imagery tells us of what he had observed. It were well if we too took notes of divine providences. *I have seen the wicked in great power.* The man was terrible to others, ruling with much authority, and carrying things with a high hand, a Cæsar in might, a Crœsus in wealth. *And spreading himself like a green bay-tree.* Adding house to house and field to field, rising higher and higher in the state. He seemed to be ever verdant like a laurel, he grew as a tree in its own native soil, from which it had never been transplanted. No particular tree is here meant, a spreading beech or a wide expanding oak may serve us to realize the picture; it is a thing of earth, whose roots are in the clay; its honours are fading leaves; and though its shadow dwarfs the plants which are condemned to pine beneath it, yet it is itself a dying thing, as the feller's axe shall prove. In the noble tree, which claims to be king of the forest, behold the grandeur of the ungodly to-day; wait awhile and wonder at the change, as the timber is carried away, and the very root torn from the ground.—*Spurgeon.*

A green bay tree. The word (אזרח ezrakh) occurs only in this text, and has

been variously explained. Most of the rabbins, followed by Mudge, Waterland, Gesenius, Hengstenberg, and many others, prefer that which is given in our marginal reading, denoting an indigenous tree—implying the flourishing condition of that which grows in its native and congenial soil. This we certainly prefer. But the Septuagint, Vulgate, and some other ancient versions, followed by some good authorities, have "cedar." For the reading of "bay tree" we are not aware of any authority, except the very feeble one which is offered by some of the older of the modern versions, in this country and on the Continent. Images comparing the transitory nature of human hope and prosperity to the sudden blight and overthrow which so often befall the glory of the forest or the pride of the garden, are at once so beautiful and natural that they have been employed by poets of every country and age as often as by those of Israel. A passage in one of our own poets (Shakspeare) furnishes a beautiful paraphrase on the present text.

"This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls." —*Kitto.*

PSALM XXXVIII.

This psalm tells the story of a bitter suffering. The suffering is both in body and in mind. The body is wasted by a cruel and loathsome disease, and the mind is full of anguish, arising partly from a deep sense of sin, and partly from the fear of relentless and now rejoicing enemies. Body and mind, in such circumstances, act and react upon one another. Mental anguish impairs the strength of the body; and bodily suffering and weakness make us less able to face with steady and resolute courage the horrors which crowd upon the mind.

To add to his distress, the sufferer is deserted even of his friends. They to whose kind offices he might naturally have looked at such a time, they who had been his friends in his health and prosperity, and who might now have watched by his sick-bed, and spoken words of comfort to him in his sorrow, turned coldly away and left him alone with his grief. A burning fever consumed him (ver. 7), his heart beat hotly, his eyes failed him, the bitter remembrance of his sin was with him; there was the consciousness and the fear of God's displeasure; and as if this were not enough, there was besides all this the utter loneliness, never so hard to bear as in such a season of bodily and mental prostration; the weary couch, never so weary as when no hand is there to smooth it; the pain of the disease, far more acutely felt because none offered sympathy; the terrors of conscience and of imagination, aggravated because they had to be endured in solitude. Suffering seems here to have reached its height. But out of the very midst of the furnace the sufferer can say, "Lord, before thee is all my desire; in thee, O Jehovah, have I hoped;" can cry with all the earnestness of a faith purified by affliction, "Leave me not, be not far from me, O Lord, my salvation."—*Perowne.*

The title correctly ascribes this psalm to David. The contents well agree with this. We know nothing of the particular circumstances under which it was written, except that its author was in deep distress. Hengstenberg: "Of any particular occasion there is found no trace in the psalm." Some have thought otherwise; but they have not well sustained their opinions. The title has claimed considerable attention. The Hebrew is well rendered in our version, though there is no objection to the renderings of others: *For remembrance; To commemorate; To call to mind; To remind.* But who is to be reminded? Hengstenberg: "Not, as is generally supposed, the psalmist himself, or the whole church, but God, who seemed to have forgotten the psalmist." With him agrees Alexander. Calvin: "The title indicates that David composed this psalm as a memorial for himself as well as others, lest he should too soon forget the chastisement by which God had afflicted him." Morison is of the opinion that "this psalm was composed by David as a memorial of the deep sorrow of mind when his spirit was burdened with the remembrance of some grievous offence against God." May it not have been as a remembrancer to God and also a memorial to himself? It is not likely that any part of the title has reference to the *music*

with which the psalm was to be sung. —*Plumer.*

PSALM XXXIX.

"The most beautiful," says Ewald, "of all elegies in the Psalter." It is the sorrowful complaint of a heart not yet subdued to a perfect resignation, but jealous with a godly jealousy, lest it should bring dishonour upon its God, and longing for light from heaven to scatter its doubts. The holy singer had long pent up his feelings; and though busy thoughts were stirring within him, he would not give them utterance. He could not bare his bosom to the rude gaze of an unsympathizing world. And he feared lest, while telling his perplexities, some word might drop from his lips which would give the wicked an occasion to speak evil against his God. (This feeling is one the expression of which we have already had in the preceding psalm.) And when at last, unable to express his strong emotion, he speaks, it is to God and not to man. It is as one who feels how hopeless the problem of life is, except as seen in the light of God. It is with the deep conviction of personal frailty (ver. 6) and sinfulness (ver. 9), as well as of the frailty and sinfulness of all men. It is with the touching sadness of one who cannot be comforted. And yet the weeping eye is raised to heaven, and amidst all his grief and perplexity, notwithstanding all that is so dark and cheerless in the world, pilgrim and stranger as he is, the holy singer can still say, "My hope is in thee."—*Perowne.*

4. *Lord, make me to know mine end.* In what relation does the prayer stand to the perplexity which gave birth to it? Why does he ask, MAKE ME KNOW MINE END? It is not (as Hengst. supposes) an expression of impatience, "I am weary of this suffering: tell me when my life shall end, and so my suffering end;" nor is it an expostulation with God (as Kimchi and Calvin), as if he would say, "See how short my life is: is such a life long enough for all thou layest upon me?" Such interpretations are at variance with the tone of sad resignation which breathes through the psalm. It is rather this: Make me rightly to know and estimate the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that so, instead of suffering myself to be perplexed with all that I see around me, I may cast myself the more entirely upon thee," as indeed follows, "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" *Perowne.*

6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain show.* Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. Worldly men walk like travellers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end his labour lost; for like the treasure of the miser's dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamour of the market, the hum of the exchange, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over-worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's-self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon. *He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.* He misses often the result of his ventures, for there are many slips between the cup and the lips. His wheat is sheaved, but an interloping robber bears it away—as often happens with the poor Eastern husbandman; or, the wheat is even stored, but the invader feasts thereon. Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all-gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all-scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. We know not our heirs, for our children die, and strangers fill the old ancestral halls; estates change hands, and entail, though rivetted with a thousand bonds, yields to the corroding power of time. Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its

passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its first builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed.—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XL.

The reader will observe that Mr. Barnes ably advocates the exclusive Messianic reference; and his treatment of the whole psalm on this principle, as well as his reply to special objections, will carry many readers along with him. We give the following extracts, exhibiting the *principle* of interpretation respectively adopted by Alexander, Delitzsch, and Binnie. Dr. Binnie's principle, which seems to us, on the whole, best to meet all the difficulties of the case, is presented with singular clearness, force, and beauty.

"Since the ceremonies of the law are worthless, when divorced from habitual obedience, instead of offering mere sacrifice, I offer myself, to do whatever is prescribed to me in the written revelation of thy will." This is the spirit of every true believer, and is therefore perfectly appropriate to the whole class to whom this psalm relates, and for whom it was intended. It is peculiarly significant, however, when applied to Christ: first, because he alone possessed this spirit in perfection; secondly, because he sustained a peculiar relation to the rites, and more especially the sacrifices, of the law. David, or any other individual believer under the old economy, was bound to bring himself as an oblation, in completion, or in lieu of his external gifts; but such self-devotion was peculiarly important upon Christ's part, as the real sacrifice, of which those rites were only figures. The failure of any individual to render this essential offering insured his own destruction. But if Christ had failed to do the same, all his followers must have perished. It is not, therefore, an accommodation of the passage to a subject altogether different, but an exposition of it in its highest application, that is given in Heb. x. 5-10. The limitation of the words to Christ, as an exclusive Messianic prophecy, has the twofold inconvenience of forbidding its use by the large class of godly sufferers for whom it seems so admirably suited, and of requiring us to understand even the confession of sins as uttered in his person.—*Alexander.*

The Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. x. 5-9, interprets ver. 7-9 of this psalm (after the LXX.) as words of Messiah coming into the world. That this interpretation of the psalm is made on the typical principle, is evident from the second part of the psalm itself. Words spoken by David after his anointing, but while he is only as yet on the way to the throne, are so shaped by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, that they sound like words of the second David as he goes through sufferings to his glory—that David whose sacrifice of himself puts an end to the animal sacrifices, and whose person and work are the kernel and the star of the roll of the law.—*Delitzsch.*

There are psalms demonstrably Messianic which cannot well be assigned to either of the two classes we have surveyed. They are neither directly predictive of Christ, nor yet do they speak of him through some type. The two most prominent examples of this class are the sixteenth and the fortieth. Its characteristic features will be best illustrated by examining one of these. For various reasons I select the fortieth. This (ver. 5-9) is applied to Christ in the most unqualified way in the epistle to the Hebrews (ch. x. 4-10). There is no mistaking the view here taken of David's words. So plainly is the Messianic interpretation laid down, and so strongly is the argument of the epistle built upon it, that many eminent divines conclude that Christ must be the direct and exclusive subject of the psalm. The fatal objection to that view is, that the psalm contains one of those sorrowful confessions of sin, the absence of which has just been commented upon in the case of the twenty-second, ver. 12.

In explanation of this, we are reminded, no doubt, that Christ, though he knew no sin, was made sin for us: so that he was, in a very true sense, a sinner before God. This explanation is an old one. It is thus put by Augustine:—"He made our offences his offences, that he might make his righteousness our righteousness. Why should not he who took upon him the likeness of the sinner's flesh, take upon him also the likeness of the sinner's voice?" There is force in these suggestions, and they go far to explain the fact (to which we shall revert immediately), that in one and the same psalm we hear the voice both of the sinless Saviour and his sinning people. But it is pressing them too far to urge them

as a reason why we should attribute to Christ words which, in their natural and obvious sense, are a sorrowful and shame-stricken confession of sin before God. The psalm is certainly not of the directly Messianic order.

Shall we set it down therefore among the typically Messianic class? This is a very common interpretation. According to it David is the person who speaks, but he speaks as a type of Christ, and therefore his words are attributed to Christ by the epistle to the Hebrews. But neither is this view satisfactory. David was not a type of Christ in his priesthood and sacrifice; and it is of these only, and not at all of the kingdom, that this psalm speaks. The person who here comes forward and declares his purpose to do the will of God, puts such a value on his obedience as neither David nor any mere man could, without presumption, have claimed for theirs. The true key to the psalm is to be found, not in the doctrine of the types, but rather in that of the mystical union between Christ and the church. It is a MYSTICALLY MESSIANIC psalm. This is the view taken by the ancient fathers, and especially Augustine. That great divine was penetrated with a sense of the unity which, through the grace of God, subsists between Christ and all his people, even the humblest and feeblest in the company of the saints. He is never weary of telling how, when the obscure disciples of Christ in Damascus were persecuted, the Lord resented it as a wrong done to himself, and thundered in the ear of the oppressor, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" and how, when any poor saint is visited or fed, Christ takes the kindness as done to himself (Ac. xi. 5; Mat. xxv. 40). And he makes perpetual use of the principle in endeavouring to open up the Messianic element in the Psalter. The pages of his *Enarrationes* are thus made fragrant with the savour of the Bridegroom's name. Few will deny, indeed, that he presses the principle too far. He applies it to many places that can only be successfully explained on the typical principle. Nevertheless, the principle is a sound one, and is of great value in the interpretation of Scripture.

The difficulty to be explained in the class of psalms under consideration, is the seeming incongruity involved in the attributing of different parts of one and the same song to different persons,—one part to Christ, another part to his people,—while there is nothing in the context to indicate a change of subject. The mystical hypothesis explains it by pointing out, that there is such a union between Christ and his people as warrants their being thus conjoined in the same song. That he and they are conjoined in a real fellowship of life is most certain. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free" (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13; comp. Gal. iii. 16). The CHRIST here named is not the individual person of our Lord, but he and the church together,—Christ mystical, *totus Christus caput et corpus*. This mystical union has left its effects on many parts of Scripture. Thus, throughout the prophecies of Isaiah, one and the same title, "The Servant of the Lord," is used to denote sometimes the Lord Jesus himself (ch. xlii. 1; liii. 11); sometimes his people (ch. xlii. 19); sometimes the whole mystical body, including him and them together (ch. xlix. 1-6). This no doubt wears an appearance of incongruity. But something of the kind is always found when diverse elements are conjoined in an intimate union. I sometimes speak of myself as an immortal creature, sometimes as a dying man. Why? Because my nature is not simple but composite. By my soul I am immortal; it is a "deathless principle:" by my body I am subject to corruption. Just so is it with the church. The Lord has taken his people into a union with himself, more intimate than that even of body and soul. He and they constitute one Christ. *And of that one Christ the psalter is the voice.* If in some psalms it is the members who speak and in others the Head, there are others again in which we can distinguish the speech of both. This furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of the remarkable conjoining of Christ and the church in the sixteenth and fortieth psalms. In the case of the latter the explanation is frankly accepted by Calvin, although he was as little tolerant of subtleties in the interpretation of Scripture as can well be imagined. "David (he observes) is not speaking here in his own name only, but is pointing out generally what is common to all God's children: but

when he thus bringeth in the community of the church, we must ascend to him who is the head."

It is related in the gospel that the Lord Jesus joined with the disciples in singing the paschal Hallel; and there is no reason to suppose that his voice was ever mute when the psalms were sung in the synagogues of Nazareth or Capernaum on the Sabbath-days. He lifted up his soul to God along with "the praises of Israel" (Ps. xxii. 3); and he did not deem it necessary to refrain his voice when the melody descended to notes of contrite confession. There was no impropriety nor untruthfulness in his thus making use of words which, in their letter, were inapplicable to his case. There is hardly a psalm but contains things which are applicable only to some in the congregation; yet all who are present take part in the song. We do not enjoin the little children to be silent when the seventy-first Psalm is sung, although it is the song of old age; nor the aged men to be silent when the twenty-seventh is sung, although it is the prayer of a youth. The psalms are church songs, and all who belong to the church are to sing them. "Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxlviii. 12, 13). The ripe believer, who can triumph in the steadfast hope of God's glory, is to lend his voice to swell the song of the church when she cries to God out of the depths; and the penitent, who is still sitting in darkness, is not to refrain his voice when the church pours out in song her sense of God's love. The whole church has fellowship in the psalms. And from this fellowship the divine Head does not turn away. There are sentiments here and there in which he cannot perfectly participate. Nevertheless, the psalms are the voice of the body of which he is the Head, and therefore he joins in them. This simple fact, that the Lord Jesus sang the psalms,—how vividly does it represent the mystical union! When we sing the psalms, especially those in which the voice of Christ makes itself so distinctly audible as it is in the sixteenth and fortieth, it ought to affect our hearts to think that we are, in effect, sitting beside Christ, as the disciples did in the guest-chamber, and are singing along with him out of the same book.—*Binnie.*

1. *I waited patiently for the Lord*, &c. Patient waiting upon God was a special characteristic of our Lord Jesus. Impatience never lingered in his heart, much less escaped his lips. All through his agony in the garden, his trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and his passion on the tree, he waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; he waited and waited on; was patient, and patient to perfection, far excelling all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. Job on the dunghill does not equal Jesus on the cross. The Christ of God wears the imperial crown among the patient. Did the Only Begotten wait, and shall we be petulant and rebellious? *And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* Neither Jesus the head, nor any one of the members of his body, shall ever wait upon the Lord in vain. Mark the figure of inclining, as though the suppliant cried out of the lowest depression, and condescending love stooped to hear his feeble moans. What a marvel is it that our Lord Jesus should have to cry as we do, and wait as we do, and should receive the Father's help after the same process of faith and pleading as must be gone through by ourselves! The Saviour's prayers among the midnight mountains and in Gethsemane expound this verse. The Son of David was brought very low, but he rose to victory; and here he teaches us how to conduct our conflicts so as to succeed after the same glorious pattern of triumph. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; and panoplied in patience, armed with prayer, and girt with faith, let us maintain the holy war.—*Spurgeon.*

5. *Many, O Lord*, &c. Read this verse and meditate on what he who is the Word suggests: "*God's thoughts towards us!*" The unnumbered multitude of his thoughts of love to us! The forests with their countless leaves, the grass on every plain and mountain of earth with its numberless blades, the sands on every shore of every river and ocean, the waves of every sea, and the drops of every wave of every sea, the stars of heaven; none of these, nor all combined, could afford an adequate idea of "*his thoughts towards us:*"—"*there is no comparison to thee*"—nothing wherewith to help out a statement. And the *depth of love* in every one of these thoughts!—*A. A. Bonar.*

9, 10. *I have preached righteousness*, &c. These remarkable words of the great prophet received a partial accomplishment in such sermons as the one which filled with astonishment the townspeople of Nazareth, amongst whom he had grown up; but their proper and full accomplishment is that which they are receiving year by year. In the gospel of Christ "the righteousness of God is revealed to faith," Ro. i. 17. Wherever that righteousness is faithfully declared, it matters not who the preacher may be, the message is Christ's, and it is to be received as his. In this connection, also, I may cite the classical text from the twenty-second Psalm (ver. 22):—

> I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
> In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Our Lord had these words in his heart when he said in the guest-chamber, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it," Jn. xvii. 26. They are a compendious summary of all he taught the disciples, and of all that he will continue by them to teach all generations. The drift of Christ's teaching is evermore *to declare to men God's name;* in other words, to set forth what they are to believe concerning God. But the peculiar glory of the psalmist's intimation of Christ's prophetical office lies in the golden words, *My brethren.* Christ teaches, in the midst of the church, not with the dazzling majesty of the Godhead, but in the milder radiance of the first-born of the many brethren. The words of the psalmist suggest, by contrast, the manner in which God's name was declared from Horeb, in the audience of the mighty congregation that filled the plain below. It was with thunder-peals, out of the thick darkness. The people found the weight of the glory insupportable, and entreated that Moses, their brother, might be constituted an internuntius to bear to them the word of the Lord. It was in allusion to that entreaty that, when Moses afterwards delivered the prediction respecting Christ, in which, for the first time, mention is made of his prophetical office, it ran in these terms: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me," De. xviii. 15; *of thy brethren*, so that his voice will not affright thee, any more than mine has done. In the psalm, the prophet thus announced takes up the promise, and repeats it in his own person: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren."—*Binnie.*

PSALM XLI.

1. *The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.* The compassionate lover of the poor thought of others, and therefore God will think of him. God measures to us with our own bushel. Days of trouble come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. How true was this of our Lord! never trouble deeper nor triumph brighter than his, and glory be to his name, he secures the ultimate victory of all his blood-bought ones. Would that they all were more like him in putting on bowels of compassion to the poor. Much blessedness they miss who stint their alms. The joy of doing good, the sweet reaction of another's happiness, the approving smile of Heaven upon the heart, if not upon the estate; all these the niggardly soul knows nothing of. Selfishness bears in itself a curse, it is a cancer in the heart; while liberality is happiness, and maketh fat the bones. In dark days we cannot rest upon the supposed merit of almsgiving, but still the music of memory brings with it no mean solace when it tells of widows and orphans whom we have succoured, and prisoners and sick folk to whom we have ministered.—*Spurgeon.*

3. *The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.* The everlasting arms shall stay up his soul as friendly hands and downy pillows stay up the body of the sick. How tender and sympathizing is this image; how near it brings our God to our infirmities and sicknesses! Whoever heard this of the old heathen Jove, or of the gods of India or China? This is language peculiar to the God of Israel; he it is who deigns to become nurse and attendant upon good men. If he smites with one hand he sustains with the other. Oh, it is blessed fainting when one falls upon the Lord's own bosom, and is upborne thereby! Grace is the best of restoratives; divine love is the noblest stimulant for a languishing patient; it makes the soul strong as a giant, even when

the aching bones are breaking through the skin. No physician like the Lord, no tonic like his promise, no wine like his love. *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.* What, doth the Lord turn bedmaker to his sick children? Herein is love indeed. Who would not consider the poor if such be the promised reward? A bed soon grows hard when the body is weary with tossing to and fro upon it, but grace gives patience, and God's smile gives peace, and the bed is made soft because the man's heart is content; the pillows are downy because the head is peaceful. Note that the Lord will make *all* his bed, from head to foot. What considerate and indefatigable kindness! Our dear and ever-blessed Lord Jesus, though in all respects an inheritor of this promise, for our sakes condescended to forego the blessing, and died on a cross and not upon a bed; yet, even there, he was after awhile upheld and cheered by the Lord his God, so that he died in triumph.

We must not imagine that the benediction pronounced in these three verses belongs to all who casually give money to the poor, or leave it in their wills, or contribute to societies. Such do well, or act from mere custom, as the case may be, but they are not here alluded to. The blessing is for those whose habit it is to love their neighbour as themselves, and who for Christ's sake feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To imagine a man to be a saint who does not consider the poor as he has ability, is to conceive the fruitless fig-tree to be acceptable; there will be sharp dealing with many professors on this point in the day when the King cometh in his glory.—*Spurgeon.*



Notes on the Old Testament

Albert Barnes

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THE BOOK OF PSALMS

PSALM XLII.

The *title* of this psalm is, "To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. On the term *Maschil*, see Notes on the title to Ps. xxxii. This title is prefixed to eleven psalms. It properly means, as in the margin, *giving instruction*. But why such a title was prefixed to these psalms rather than to others is unknown. So far as appears, the title, in that sense, would be applicable to many other psalms as well as to these, whether understood in the signification of "giving instruction" in general, or of "giving instruction" on any particular subject. It is not easy to give an account of the origin of such titles long after the occasion for affixing them has passed away. The phrase "for the sons of Korah" is rendered in the margin "of the sons," etc. The Hebrew may mean *for* the sons of Korah; *of* the sons of Korah; or *to* the sons of Korah, as it is here rendered by Prof. Alexander. The LXX. render the title "*For the end*—εἰς τὸ τέλος: —*for understanding*, εἰς σύνεσιν: —*to the sons of Kore*, τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορέ." So the Latin Vulgate. De Wette renders it, "A poem of the sons of Korah." The psalms to which this title is prefixed are the xlii., xliv., xlv., xlvi., xlvii., xlviii., xlix., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii. So far as the *title* is concerned, it may mean either that the psalms were dedicated to them, or that they were submitted to them for arranging the music; or that they were designed to be employed by them as leaders of the music; or that they were the authors of these psalms, that is, that the psalms thus indicated emanated from their body, or were composed by one of their number. *Which* of these is the true idea must be determined, if determined at all, from some other source than the mere title. The sons of Korah were a family of Levitical singers. Korah was a great-grandson of Levi, (Num. xvi. 1). He was united with Dathan and Abiram in opposition to Moses, and was the leader of the conspiracy, Num. xvi. 2; Jude 11. Korah had three sons, Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph (Ex. vi. 24); and of their descendants David selected a number to preside over the music of the sanctuary, 1 Chron. vi. 22, 23, 31; and they continued in this service until the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 19. One of the most eminent of the descendants of Korah, who was employed especially in the musical service of the sanctuary, was Heman: 1 Chron. vi. 33, "Of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman, a singer." The sons of Heman were appointed by David, in connexion with the sons of Asaph, and of Jeduthun, to preside over the music: 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 4, 6; 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 14; xxxv. 15. See Notes on the title to Ps. xxxix. The general appellation, the "sons of Korah," seems to have been given to this company or class of singers. Their office was to preside over the music of the sanctuary; to arrange tunes for the music; to distribute the parts; and *possibly* to furnish compositions for that service. Whether, however, they actually *composed* any of the psalms is uncertain. It would seem that the usual custom was for the author of a psalm or hymn designed for public service to deliver it, when composed, into the hands of these leaders of the music, to be employed by them in the public devotions of the people. Thus, in 1 Chron. xvi. 7, it is said, "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm, to thank the Lord, *into the hand of Asaph and his brethren*." Comp. 2 Chron. xxix. 30. See also Notes on the title of Ps. l.

It is not absolutely certain, therefore, who composed this psalm. If it was written by David, as seems most probable, it was with some reference to the "sons of Korah;" that is, to those who presided over the music of the sanctuary. In other words, it was prepared *especially* to be used by them in the sanctuary, in contradistinction from psalms which had a more general reference, or which were composed for no such specific design. If

it was written *by* the sons of Korah, that is, by any one of their number, it was intended by the author, undoubtedly, to illustrate the feelings of a man of God in deep trials; and the language and the allusions were probably drawn from the history of David, as furnishing the best historical instance for such an illustration of feeling. In this case, the language would be that of one placing himself in imagination in such circumstances, and giving in poetic form a description of the emotions which would pass through his mind, *as if* they were his own,—unless it be supposed that one of the sons of Korah, the author of the psalm, had actually experienced such trials himself. I regard the former as the most probable supposition, and consider that the psalm was composed *by* David specifically for the use of the leaders of the music in the sanctuary. The *name* of the author may have been omitted because it was so well understood who he was that there was no need to designate him.

There is a very marked resemblance between this psalm and the forty-third. They were composed on a similar, if not on the same occasion; and the two might be united so as to constitute one connected psalm. In fact, they *are* thus united in thirty-seven codices of Kennicott, and in nine of De Rossi. The structure of both is the same, though they are separated in most of the Hebrew MSS., in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, in the Chaldee Paraphrase, and in the Syriac and Arabic versions.

The forty-second psalm consists of two parts, marked by the *burden* or *refrain* in vers. 5 and 11; and if Psalm xliii. were regarded as a part of the same composition, the two would be divided into three parts, marked by the same *burden* or *refrain*, in Ps. xlii. 5, 11, and xliii. 5. Of these parts the general structure is similar, containing (*a*) an expression of trouble, sorrow, despondency; and then (*b*) a solemn appeal of the author to his own soul, asking why he should be cast down, and exhorting himself to put his trust in God.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed by David, if he wrote it,—or the occasion which was supposed by the author, if that author was one of the sons of Korah,—is not certainly known. The psalm agrees best with the supposition that it was in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his throne, and from the place which he had appointed for the worship of God after he had removed the ark to Mount Zion, and when he was an exile and a wanderer beyond the Jordan, 2 Samuel xv.-xviii.

The psalm records the feelings of one who had been driven away from the place where he had been accustomed to worship God, and his recollections of those sad days when he endeavoured to comfort himself in his despondency by looking to God, and by dwelling on his promises.

I. In the first part (vers. 1–5) there is
  (1) An expression of his desire to hold communion with God—the panting of his soul after God, vers. 1, 2.
  (2) His tears under the reproaches of his enemies, while they said, "Where is thy God?" ver. 3.
  (3) His remembrance of the former days when he had gone with the multitude to the house of God; and the expression of a firm belief, implied in the language used, that he *would* go again to the house of God, and with them would keep "holyday," ver. 4. See Notes on that verse.
  (4) Self-remonstrance for his despondency, and an exhortation to himself to arouse and to trust in God, with the confident assurance that he would yet be permitted to praise Him, ver. 5.

II. The second part contains a series of similar reflections, vers. 6–11.
  (1) A description of his desponding feelings under these circumstances; under the troubles which had rolled over him like waters, vers. 6, 7.
  (2) An assurance that God would yet manifest His loving-kindness to him; and, on the ground of that, an earnest appeal to God as his God, vers. 8, 9.
  (3) A further statement of his troubles, as derived from the reproaches of his enemies, as if a sword penetrated even to his bones, ver. 10.
  (4) Self-remonstrance again for his despondency, and an exhortation to himself to trust in God (in the same language with which the former part of the psalm closes), ver. 11.

The idea of the whole is, that we

PSALM XLII.

To the chief Musician, [1] Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

[1] Or, A Psalm *giving instruction to the sons, etc.*

should *not* be overwhelmed or cast down in trouble; that we should confide in God; that we should be cheerful, not desponding; that we should go to God, whatever may happen; and that we should feel that all will yet be well, that all will be overruled for good, and that brighter and happier days will come. How often have the people of God occasion to use the language of this psalm! In a world of trouble and sorrow such as ours is; in a world where the friends of God have often been, and may again be, persecuted; in the anguish which is felt from the ingratitude of children, kindred, and friends; in the distress which springs up in the heart when, from sickness or from any other cause, we are long deprived of the privileges of public worship—in *exile* as it were from the sanctuary — how imperfect would be a book professing to be a revelation from God, if it did *not* contain some such psalm as this, so accurately describing the feelings of those who are in such circumstances; so adapted to their wants; so well fitted to direct to the true source of consolation! It is this *adaptedness* of the Bible to the actual requirements of mankind,—this accurate description of the feelings which pass through our own mind and heart,—this constant direction to God as the true source of support and consolation—which so much endears the Bible to the hearts of the people of God, and which serves, more than any arguments from miracle and prophecy—valuable as those arguments are — to keep up in their minds the conviction that the Bible *is* a Divine revelation. Psalms like this make the Bible a *complete* book, and show that He who gave it "knew what is in man," and what man needs in this vale of tears.

1. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks.* Marg., *brayeth.* The word rendered *hart*—אַיָּל, *ayyal*—means commonly a stag, hart, male deer: Deut. xii. 15; xiv. 5; Isa. xxxv. 6. The word is masculine, but in this place is joined with a feminine verb, as words of the common gender may be, and thus denotes a *hind,* or

AS the hart [2] panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

[2] *brayeth.*

female deer. The word rendered in the text *panteth,* and in the margin *brayeth*—עָרַג, *arag*—occurs only in this place and in Joel i. 20, where it is applied to the beasts of the field as "crying" to God in a time of drought. The word properly means to rise; to ascend; and then, to look up towards anything; to long for. It refers here to the intense desire of the hind, in the heat of day, for water; or, in Joel, to the desire of the cattle for water in a time of drought. Luther renders it "cries;" the Septuagint and Vulgate render it simply "desires." Neither the idea of *panting* nor *braying* seems to be in the original word. It is the idea of looking for, longing for, desiring, that is expressed there. By *water-brooks* are meant the streams that run in vallies. Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. i., p. 253) says, "I have seen large flocks of these panting harts gather round the water-brooks in the great deserts of Central Syria, so subdued by thirst that you could approach quite near them before they fled." There is an idea of tenderness in the reference to the word *hart* here—female deer, gazelle—which would not strike us if the reference had been to any other animal. These are so timid, so gentle, so delicate in their structure, so much the natural objects of love and compassion, that our feelings are drawn towards them as to all other animals in similar circumstances. We sympathize with them; we pity them; we love them; we feel deeply for them when they are pursued, when they fly away in fear, when they are in want. The following engraving will help us more to appreciate the comparison employed by the psalmist. Nothing could more beautifully or appropriately describe the earnest longing of a soul after God, in the circumstances of the psalmist, than this image. ¶ *So*

2 My soul [a] thirsteth for God, for the living God: when [b] shall I come and appear before God?

[a] Ps. lxiii. 1; John vii. 37. [b] Job xxiii. 3.

panteth my soul after thee, O God. So earnest a desire have I to come before thee, and to enjoy thy presence and thy favour. So sensible am I of want; so much does my soul need something that can satisfy its desires. This was at first applied to the case of one who was cut off from the privileges of public worship, and is experienced when one who loves God is cut off by any cause from communion with him.

2. *My soul thirsteth for God.* That is, as the hind thirsts for the running stream. ¶ *For the living God.* God, not merely as God, without anything more definitely specified, but God considered as *living*, as himself *possessing* life, and as having the power of *imparting* that life to the soul. ¶ *When shall I come and appear before God?* That is, as I have been accustomed to do in the sanctuary. When shall I be restored to the privilege of again uniting with his people in public prayer and praise? The psalmist evidently expected that this would be; but to one who loves public worship the time seems long



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who was driven into exile far from the place where he had been accustomed to unite with others in that service (ver. 4); but it will also express the deep and earnest feelings of the heart of piety at all times, and in all circumstances, in regard to God. There is no desire of the soul more intense than that which the pious heart has for God; there is no want more deeply felt than that which

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?

4 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to

when he is prevented from enjoying that privilege.

3. *My tears have been my meat.* The word rendered *tears* in this place is in the singular number, and means literally *weeping*. Comp. Ps. xxxix. 12. The word *meat* here means literally *bread*, and is used in the general signification of *food*, as the word *meat* is always used in the English version of the Bible. The English word *meat*, which originally signified *food*, has been changed gradually in its signification, until it now denotes in common usage animal food, or flesh. The idea here is, that instead of *eating*, he had *wept*. The state described is that which occurs so often when excessive sorrow takes away the appetite, or destroys the relish for food, and occasions fasting. This was the foundation of the whole idea of fasting,—that sorrow, and especially sorrow for sin, takes away the desire for food for the time, and leads to involuntary abstinence. Hence arose the correlative idea of abstaining from food with a view to *promote* that deep sense of sin, or to produce a condition of the body which would be favourable to a proper recollection of guilt. ¶ *Day and night.* Constantly; without intermission. See Notes on Ps. i. 2. ¶ *While they continually say unto me.* While it *is* constantly said to me; that is, by mine enemies. See ver. 10. ¶ *Where is thy God?* See Ps. iii. 2; xxii. 8. The meaning here is, "He seems to be utterly forsaken or abandoned by God. He trusted in God. He professed to be his friend. He looked to him as his protector. But he is now forsaken, as if he had no God; and God is treating him as if he were none of his; as if he had no love for him, and no concern about his welfare."

4. *When I remember these* things. These sorrows; this banishment from the house of God; these reproaches of my enemies. The verb here used is in the future tense, and would be appropriately rendered "I *will* remember these things, and I *will* pour out my soul within me." That is, it is not a mere recollection of the past, but it indicates a state or purpose of mind—a solemn resolution to bear these things ever in remembrance, and to allow them to produce a proper impression on his mind and heart that would not be effaced by time. Though the future tense is used as denoting what the state of his mind *would* be, the immediate reference is to the past. The sorrows and afflictions which *had* overwhelmed him were the things he would remember. ¶ *I pour out my soul in me.* Heb., *upon me.* See Notes on Job xxx. 16. The idea is derived from the fact that the soul in grief seems to be *dissolved*, or to lose all firmness, consistency, or power, and to be like water. We speak now of the soul as being *melted, tender, dissolved*, with sympathy or grief, or as *overflowing* with joy. ¶ *For I had gone with the multitude.* The word here rendered *multitude*—סָךְ, *sach*—occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is supposed to denote properly a thicket of trees; a thick wood; and then, a crowd of men. The LXX. render it, "I will pass on to the place of the wonderful tabernacle,"—σκηνῆς θαυμαστῆς. So the Latin Vulgate. Luther translates it, "multitude," *Haufen*. The Hebrew verb is in the future—"I shall pass," or "when I pass," indicating a confident expectation of a favourable issue of his present trials, and referring not to the fact that he *had* gone with the multitude in time past, but to the fact that he *would* be permitted to go with them in solemn procession

the house of God, with the voice of [c] joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

[c] Ps. cxxii. 1.

5 Why art thou [1] cast down, O

[1] *bowed down.*

to the house of God, and that then he *would* recall these things, and pour out his soul in the fulness of his emotions. The Septuagint renders this in the future; so also the Latin Vulgate, De Wette, and Prof. Alexander. Luther renders it, "For I would gladly go hence with the multitude." It seems clear, therefore, that this does not refer to what *had been* in the past, but to what he confidently hoped and expected *would be* in the future. He expected again to go with the multitude to the house of God. Even in his exile, and in his sorrows, he confidently anticipated this, and he says that he would then pour forth the full expression of gratitude—his whole soul—in view of all these things which had occurred. He was *now* in exile: his heart was overwhelmed with sorrow; he was away from the place of worship—the house of God; he no longer went with others with solemn steps to the sanctuary, but he hoped and expected again to be permitted to do so; and, in view of this, he calls on his soul (ver. 5) not to be cast down. This interpretation, referring it to the future, also brings this part of the psalm into harmony with the subsequent part (ver. 8), where the author of the psalm confidently expresses the same hope. ¶ *I went with them to the house of God.* The tabernacle; the place of public worship. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6. The Hebrew verb here is also in the future tense, and, in accordance with the interpretation above, the meaning is, "I *will* go," etc. The word occurs only here, and in Isa. xxxviii. 15, "I shall go softly all my years." See the word explained in the Notes on that passage. It seems here to be used with reference to a movement in a slow and solemn procession, as in the usual processions connected with public worship among the Hebrews. The meaning is, that he would go with the multitude with seriousness and solemnity, as they went up to the house of God to worship. ¶ *With the voice of joy and praise.* Chanting hymns to God. ¶ *With a multitude that kept holyday.* The word here rendered *multitude*—הָמוֹן, *hamon*—is different from that which is employed in the former part of the verse. This is the *usual* word to denote a multitude. It literally means a noise or sound, as of rain, 1 Kings xviii. 41; then, a multitude or crowd *making* a noise, as of nations, or of an army, Isa. xiii. 4; Judges iv. 7; Dan. xi. 11, 12, 13. The word rendered "that kept holyday"—חוֹגֵג, *khogaig*—from חָגַג, *khagag*, to dance—means literally *dancing;* dancing in a circle; and then, keeping a festival, celebrating a holyday, as this was done formerly by leaping and dancing, Ex. v. 1; Lev. xxiii. 41. The meaning is, that he would join with the multitude in the joyful celebrations of public worship. This was the bright anticipation before him in exile; this cheered and sustained his heart when sinking in despair.

5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* Marg., *bowed down.* The Hebrew word means to bow down, to incline oneself; then, usually, to prostrate oneself as in public worship; and then, to sink down under the weight of sorrow; to be depressed and sad. The LXX. render it, "Why art thou grieved?"—περίλυπος. So the Vulgate. This is an earnest remonstrance addressed by himself *to his own soul,* as if there were really no occasion for this excessive depression; as if he cherished his grief improperly. There was a brighter side, and he *ought* to turn to that, and take a more cheerful view of the matter. He had allowed his mind to rest on the dark side, to look at the discouraging things in his condition. He now felt

my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet [1] praise him [2] *for* the help of his countenance.

[1] Or, *give thanks.*

[2] Or, *his presence* is *salvation.*

that this was in some measure voluntary, or had been indulged too freely, and that it was wrong: that it was *proper* for a man like him to seek for comfort in brighter views; that it was a *duty* which he owed to himself and to the cause of religion to take brighter views. We may remark, (1.) That there are two sides to the events which occur, and which seem so discouraging to us—a *dark* side and a *bright* side. (2.) That in certain states of mind, connected often with a diseased nervous system, we are prone to look only on the *dark* side, to see only what is gloomy and discouraging. (3.) That this often becomes in a sense *voluntary*, and that we find a melancholy satisfaction in *being* miserable, and in *making* ourselves more unhappy, as if we had been wronged, and as if there were a kind of virtue in dejection and gloom —in "refusing," like Rachel, "*to be comforted*" (Jer. xxxi. 15);—perhaps also feeling as if by this we were *deserving* of the Divine approbation, and laying the foundation for some *claim* to favour on the score of merit. (4.) That in this we are often eminently *guilty*, as putting away those consolations which God has provided for us; as if a man, under the influence of some morbid feeling, should find a kind of melancholy pleasure in starving himself to death in the midst of a garden full of fruit, or dying of thirst by the side of a running fountain. And (5) that it is the *duty* of the people of God to look at the bright side of things; to think of the past mercies of God; to survey the blessings which surround us still; to look to the future, in this world and the next, with hope; and to come to God, and cast the burden on him. It is a part of religious duty to be *cheerful;* and a man may often do more real good by a cheerful and submissive mind in times of affliction, than he could by much active effort in the days of health, plenty, and prosperity. Every sad and desponding Christian *ought* to say to his soul, "*Why* art thou thus cast down?" ¶ *And* why *art thou disquieted in me?* Troubled, sad. The word means literally, (1) to growl as a bear; (2) to sound, or make a noise, as a harp, rain, waves; (3) to be agitated, troubled, or anxious in mind: *to moan internally.* See Notes on Isa. xvi. 11; comp. Jer. xlviii. 36. ¶ *Hope thou in God.* That is, trust in him, with the hope that he will interpose and restore thee to the privileges and comforts heretofore enjoyed. The soul turns to God when all other hope fails, and finds comfort in the belief that he can and will aid us. ¶ *For I shall yet praise him.* Marg., *give thanks.* The idea is, that he would yet have occasion to give him thanks for his merciful interposition. This implies a strong assurance that these troubles would not last always. ¶ For *the help of his countenance.* Literally, "the salvations of his face," or his presence. The original word rendered *help* is in the plural number, meaning *salvations;* and the idea in the use of the plural is, that his deliverance would be complete or entire —as if double or manifold. The meaning of the phrase "help of his *countenance*" or "*face,*" is that God would look favourably or benignly upon him. Favour is expressed in the Scriptures by lifting up the light of the countenance on one. See Notes on Ps. iv. 6; comp. Ps. xi. 7; xxi. 6; xliv. 3; lxxxix. 15. This closes the first part of the psalm, expressing the confident belief of the psalmist that God would yet interpose, and that his troubles would have an end; reposing entire confidence in God as the only ground of hope; and expressing the feeling that when that confidence exists the soul should *not* be dejected or cast down.

6 O my God, my soul [d] is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from [1] the hill Mizar.

[d] Ps. lxxvii. 3—10.
[1] Or, *the little hill*, Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* This is the utterance of a soul in anguish, notwithstanding the purpose *not* to be cast down, and the conviction that hope *ought* to be cherished. The psalmist cannot but say that, despite all this, he *is* sad. His troubles come rushing over his soul; they all return at once; his heart is oppressed, and he is constrained to confess that, notwithstanding his solemn purpose *not* to be sad, and the conviction that he *ought* to be cheerful, and his wish to be and to appear so, yet his sorrows get the mastery over all this, and his heart is filled with grief. What sufferer has not felt thus? When he really wished to trust in God; when he hoped that things would be better; when he saw that he ought to be calm and cheerful, his sorrows have returned like a flood, sweeping all these feelings away for the time, filling his soul with anguish, compelling him to form these resolutions anew, and driving him afresh to the throne of grace, to beat back the returning tide of grief, and to bring the soul to calmness and peace. ¶ *Therefore will I remember thee.* I will look to thee; I will come to thee; I will recall thy former merciful visitations. In this lone land; far away from the place of worship; in the midst of these privations, troubles, and sorrows; surrounded as I am by taunting foes, and having no source of consolation *here*, I will remember my God. Even here, amidst these sorrows, I will lift up my heart in grateful remembrance of him, and will think of him alone. The words which follow are designed merely to give an idea of the desolation and sadness of his condition, and of the fact of his exile. ¶ *From the land of Jordan.* Referring probably to the fact he was then *in* that "land." The phrase would denote the region adjacent to the Jordan, and through which the Jordan flowed, as we speak of "the valley of the Mississippi," *i. e.* the region through which that river flows. The lands adjacent to the Jordan on either side were covered with underbrush and thickets, and were, in former times, the favourite resorts of wild animals: Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44. The psalmist was on the eastern side of the Jordan. ¶ *And of the Hermonites.* The land of the Hermonites. The region in which Mount Hermon is situated. This was on the north-east of Palestine, beyond the Jordan. Mount Hermon was a ridge or spur of Antilibanus: Josh. xi. 3, 17. This spur or ridge lies near the sources of the Jordan. It consists of several summits, and is therefore spoken of here in the plural number, *Hermonim*, the Hebrew plural of Hermon. These mountains were called by the Sidonians, *Sirion.* See Notes on Ps. xxix. 6. Different names were given to different parts of these summits of the mountain-ranges. The principal summit, or Mount Hermon properly so called, rises to the height of ten or twelve thousand feet, and is covered with perpetual snow; or rather, as Dr. Robinson says (Biblical Researches, iii. 344), the snow is perpetual in the *ravines*, so that the top presents the appearance of radiant stripes around and below the summit. The word is used here with reference to the mountain-region to which the general name of Hermon was given on the north-east of Palestine, and on the east of the sources of the Jordan. It would seem not improbable that after passing the Jordan the psalmist had gone in that direction in his exile. ¶ *From the hill Mizar.* Marg., *the little hill.* So the LXX., the Latin Vulgate, and Luther. De Wette renders it as a proper name. The word *Mizar*, or *Mitzar* (Heb.), means properly *smallness;* and thus, anything small or little. The word seems

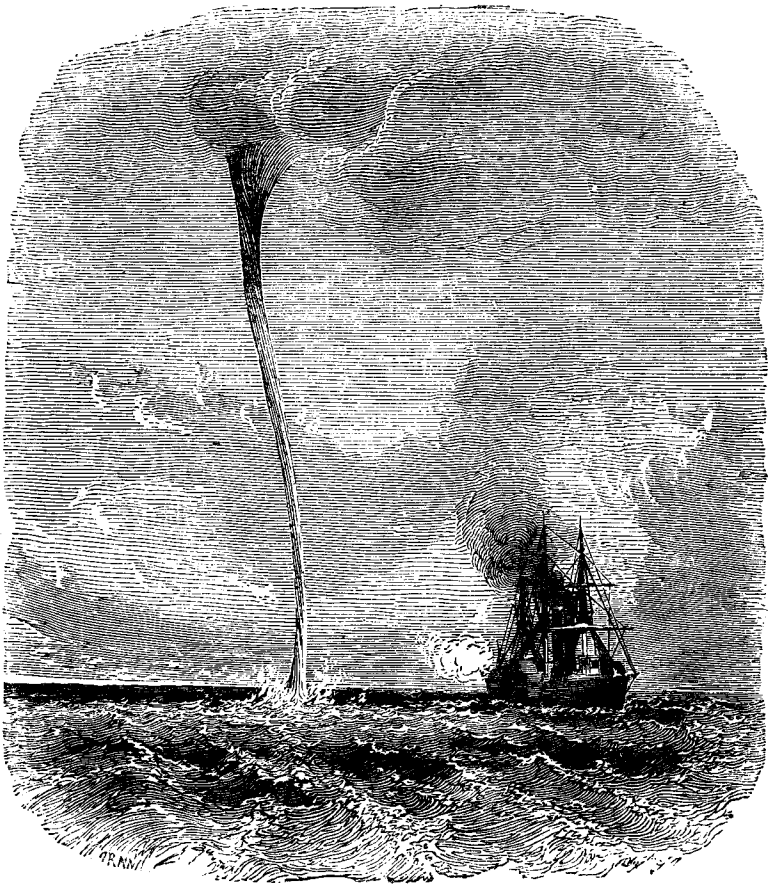
7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves [e] and thy billows are gone over me.

[e] Ps. lxxxviii. 7.

here, however, to be used as a proper name, and was probably applied to some part of that mountain-range, though to what particular portion is now unknown. This would seem to have been the place where the psalmist took up his abode in his exile. As no such name is now known to be given to any part of that mountain-range, it is impossible to identify the spot. It would seem from the following verse, however, that it was not far from the Jordan.

7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* The language used here would seem to imply that the psalmist was near some floods of water, some rapid river or water-fall, which constituted an appropriate illustration of the waves of sorrow that were rolling over his soul. It is not possible to determine exactly *where* this was, though, as suggested in the verse above, it would seem most probable that it was in the vicinity of the upper portion of the Jordan; and doubtless the Jordan, if swollen, would suggest all that is conveyed by the language used here. The word rendered *deep*—תְּהוֹם, *tehom* —means properly a wave, billow, surge, and then, a mass of waters; a flood—the deep; the sea. In this latter sense it is used in Deut. viii. 7; Ezek. xxxi. 4; Gen. vii. 11; Job xxviii. 14; xxxviii. 16, 30; Ps. xxxvi. 6. Here it would seem to mean merely a wave or billow, perhaps the waves of a rapid stream dashing on one shore, and then driven to the opposite bank, or the torrents pouring over rocks in the bed of a stream. It is not necessary to suppose that this was the ocean, nor that there was a *cataract* or *water-fall.* All that is meant here would be met by the roaring waters of a swollen river. The word "*calleth,*" here means that one wave seemed to speak to another, or one wave responded to another. See a similar expression in Ps. xix. 2, "Day unto day uttereth speech." Comp. Notes on that verse. ¶ *At the noise of thy water-spouts.* Literally, *at the voice.* That is, "water-spouts" make a noise, or seem to give forth a voice; and this *appears* to be as if one part of the "deep" were speaking to another, or as if one wave were calling with a loud voice to another. The word *water-spouts* — צִנּוֹר, *tzinnor* — occurs only here and in 2 Sam. v. 8, where it is rendered *gutter.* It properly means a cataract, or a water-fall, or a water-course, as in 2 Sam. Any pouring of water—as from the clouds, or in a swollen river, or in a "water spout," properly so called—would correspond with the use of the word here. It *may* have been rain pouring down; or it may have been the Jordan pouring its floods over rocks, for it is well known that the descent of the Jordan in that part is rapid, and especially when swollen; or it may have been the phenomena of a "water-spout," for these are not uncommon in the East. There are two forms in which "waterspouts" occur, or to which the name is given in the east, and the language here would be applicable to either of them. One of them is described in the following manner by Dr. Thomson, Land and the Book, vol. i., pp. 498, 499:—"A small black cloud traverses the sky in the latter part of summer or the beginning of autumn, and pours down a flood of rain that sweeps all before it. The Arabs call it *sale;* we, a waterspout, or the bursting of a cloud. In the neighbourhood of Hermon I have witnessed it repeatedly, and was caught in one last year, which in five minutes flooded the whole mountain side, washed away the fallen olives —the food of the poor—overthrew

stone walls, tore up by the roots large trees, and carried off whatever the tumultuous torrents encountered, as they leaped madly down from terrace to terrace in noisy cascades. Every summer threshing-floor along the line of its march was swept bare of all precious food, cattle were drowned,



WATERSPOUT.

flocks disappeared, and the mills along the streams were ruined in half an hour by this sudden deluge." The other is described in the following language, and the above engraving will furnish an illustration of it.—Land and the Book, vol. ii., pp. 256, 257:—"Look at those clouds which hang like a heavy pall of sackcloth over the sea along the western horizon. From them, on such windy days as these, are formed *waterspouts*, and I have already noticed several incipient "spouts" drawn down from the clouds toward the sea, and ... seen to be in violent agitation, whirling round on themselves as they are driven along by the wind. Directly beneath them the surface of the sea is also in commotion by a whirlwind, which travels onward in concert with the spout above. I have

8 *Yet* the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song *shall be* with me, *and* my prayer unto the God of my life.

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

often seen the two actually unite in mid air, and rush toward the mountains, writhing, and twisting, and bending like a huge serpent with its head in the clouds, and its tail on the deep." We cannot now determine to which of these the psalmist refers, but either of them would furnish a striking illustration of the passage before us. ¶ *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.* The waves of sorrow; anguish of soul; of which rolling floods would be an emblem. The rushing, and heaving, and restless waters furnished the psalmist with an illustration of the deep sorrows of his soul. So we speak of "*floods* of grief," "*floods* of tears," "*oceans* of sorrows," *as if* waves and billows swept over us. And so we speak of being "*drowned* in grief," or "in tears." Comp. Ps. cxxiv. 4, 5.

8. Yet *the* LORD *will command his loving-kindness in the daytime.* Literally, "By day the Lord will command his mercy;" that is, he will so order or direct his mercy or his favour. The word "*daytime*" here refers evidently to prosperity; and the expectation of the psalmist was that a time of prosperity would return; that he might hope for better days; that the loving-kindness of God would again be manifested to him. He did not wholly despair. He expected to see better times (comp. Notes on ver. 5); and, in view of this, and in the confident assurance of it, he says in the subsequent part of the verse that even in the night—the season of calamity—his song should be unto God, and he would praise Him. Some, however, as De Wette, have understood the words "daytime" and "night" as synonymous with "day and night;" that is, at all times; implying an assurance that God would *always* show his loving-kindness. But it seems to me that the above is the most correct interpretation. ¶ *And in the night his song* shall be *with me.* I will praise him, even in the dark night of calamity and sorrow. God will even then give me such views of himself, and such manifest consolations, that my heart will be full of gratitude, and my lips will utter praise. See Notes on Job xxxv. 10; comp. Acts xvi. 25. ¶ And *my prayer unto the God of my life.* To God, who has given me life, and who preserves my life. The meaning is, that in the dark night of sorrow and trouble he would not cease to call on God. Feeling that he had given life, and that he was able to sustain and to defend life, he would go to him and supplicate his mercy. He would not allow affliction to drive him *from* God, but it should lead him the more earnestly and fervently to implore his aid. Afflictions, God's apparently severe dealings, which it might be supposed would have a tendency to turn men *from* God, are the very means of leading them *to* him.

9. *I will say unto God my rock.* I will appeal to God as my defence, my helper, my Saviour. On the word *rock*, as applied to God, see Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *Why hast thou forgotten me?* See Notes on Ps. xxii. 1. He had *seemed* to forget and forsake him, for He did not come to interpose and save him. This is a part of the prayer which he says (ver. 8) that he would use. ¶ *Why go I mourning?* On the meaning of the word here used—קֹדֵר, *kodair*—see Notes on Ps. xxxv. 14; xxxviii. 6. The idea is that of being bowed down, made sad, deeply afflicted, as one forsaken. ¶ *Because of the oppression of the enemy. In* the oppression of the enemy; that is, during its continuance,

10 *As* with a [1]sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

[1] Or, *killing.*

or on account of it. The word here rendered *oppression* means *distress, affliction, straits,* Job xxxvi. 15; 1 Kings xxii. 27; Isa. xxx. 20. The "enemy" here referred to may have been Absalom, who had driven him from his throne and kingdom.

10. As *with a sword in my bones.* Marg., *killing.* The treatment which I receive in their reproaches is like *death.* The word rendered *sword*—רֶצַח, *retzahh*—means properly *killing, slaying, breaking in pieces, crushing.* It occurs only here and in Ezek. xxi. 22, where it is rendered *slaughter.* The LXX. render it, "In the bruising of my bones they reproach me." The Vulgate, "While they break my bones they reproach me." Luther, "It is as death in my bones, that my enemies reproach me." The idea in the Hebrew is, that their reproaches were like breaking or crushing his very bones. The idea of the "sword" is not in the original. ¶ *Mine enemies reproach me.* That is, as one forsaken of God, and as suffering justly under his displeasure. Their argument was, that if he was truly the friend of God, he would not leave him thus; that the fact of his *being* thus abandoned proved that he was not a friend of God. ¶ *While they say daily unto me.* They say this constantly. I am compelled to hear it every day. ¶ *Where* is *thy God?* See Notes on ver. 3.

11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* This closes the second strophe of the psalm, and, with one or two slight and immaterial variations, is the same as that which closes the first (ver. 5). In this latter the word "why" is inserted, and the expression "the salvation of *my* countenance" occurs instead of "salvations of *his* countenance," with the addition of the words "and my God" at the close. The sense, however, is the same; and the verse contains, as before, self-reproof for being thus cast down, and self-exhortation to put trust in God. In the former part of the psalm (ver. 5) he had addressed this language to himself, as designed to impress his own mind with the guilt of thus yielding to discouragement and sorrow; but he had then almost immediately admitted that his mind *was* distressed, and that he *was* cast down; here he rallies again, and endeavours to arouse himself to the conviction that he ought *not* to be thus depressed and dejected. He exhorts himself, therefore; he charges his own soul to hope in God. He expresses again the assurance that he *would* yet be permitted to praise him. He regards God now as the "salvation of *his* countenance," or as his Deliverer and Friend, and expresses the conviction that he would yet make such manifestations of himself as *to clear up* and *illuminate* his countenance, at present made dark and saddened by affliction; and he appeals to him now as "*his* God." He has reached the true source of comfort to the afflicted and the sad,—the living God as *his* God; and his mind is calm. Why should a man be sorrowful when he feels that he has a God? Why should his heart be sad when he can pour out his sorrows before Him? Why should he be cast down and gloomy when he can *hope*:—hope for the favour of God here; hope for immortal life in the world to come!

PSALM XLIII.

This psalm is without a title. The name of the author is unknown, and, of course, it is not known on what occasion the psalm was composed. It bears, how-

PSALM XLIII.

JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause against an [1] ungodly nation: O deliver me from [2] the deceitful and unjust man.

2 For thou *art* the God of my

[1] Or, *unmerciful.*

[2] *a man of deceit and iniquity.*

ever, a very strong resemblance, in its general spirit and in its structure, to Ps. xlii., and was, beyond doubt, composed by the same author, and in reference to the same occasion. The resemblance between the two psalms is so striking that many have supposed that they are parts of the same psalm, and as this one terminates with the same language (ver. 5) as that which occurs at the close of the two parts of Ps. xlii. (vers. 5, 11), it has been conjectured by many that this is the third part or strophe of the psalm, and that they have been separated by mistake of the transcribers. See introd. to Ps. xlii. It would be impossible to account for the fact that they had become separated in the majority of Hebrew MSS. if they had originally constituted one psalm; while the fact of their being found united in a small number of Hebrew MSS. is easily accounted for, as the resemblance of the two may have led the transcribers to suppose that they were parts of one composition. The probability is, that this psalm was composed by the same author, as a kind of *supplement* to the former psalm, or as expressing, in a slightly different form, the emotions which passed through his mind on that same occasion.

The psalm contains (1) an earnest appeal to God to assist the suffering author, and to protect him from the efforts of an ungodly nation, and from the designs of the deceitful and unjust man, ver. 1; (2) an appeal to God as his strength, with the language of anxious inquiry why he had cast him off, and had suffered him to go mourning because of the oppression of his enemy, ver. 2; (3) an earnest prayer that God would interpose, and would send out his light and his truth, and would permit him to go again to his holy hill, to the tabernacles, and to the altar, vers. 3, 4; and (4), as in Ps. xlii. 5, 11, self-reproach that he is thus dejected and dispirited, and an appeal to his own soul to arouse itself, and to put its trust in God. It is a psalm, like the former, of great practical value to those who, in affliction, are sad and desponding.

1. ***Judge me, O God.*** This does not mean, Pronounce sentence upon me; but, Undertake my cause; interpose in my behalf; do justice in the case. He regarded his own cause as right; he felt that he was greatly wronged by the treatment which he received from men, and he asks to have it shown that he was not guilty of what his enemies charged on him; that he was an upright man, and a friend of God. See Notes on Ps. vii. 8; xxvi. 1. ¶ ***And plead my cause.*** See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 1. ¶ ***Against an ungodly nation.*** Marg., *unmerciful.* Literally, "from a nation not merciful," or not religious. The idea is, that the nation or people referred to manifested none of the spirit of religion in their conduct towards him; that he was treated with severity and injustice. This entire description would agree well with the state of things in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his home and his throne: 2 Sam. xv., *seq.* ¶ ***O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.*** Marg., as in Heb., *from a man of deceit and iniquity.* This would apply well to the case and character of Absalom, or perhaps more directly and properly to the character and counsel of Ahithophel, among the leading conspirators in the rebellion of Absalom, to whose counsels much of the rebellion was owing: 2 Sam. xv. 31; comp. xvi. 23; xvii. 14, 23.

2. ***For thou*** art ***the God of my strength.*** See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2; xxviii. 7. ¶ ***Why dost thou cast me off?*** As if I were none of thine; as if I were wholly abandoned. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 1. The word rendered *cast off*—זָנַחְתָּ, *zanahh*—is a word which implies strong disgust or loathing:—"Why dost thou cast me off as a loathsome or disgusting object?" Comp. Rev. iii. 16. The Hebrew word means properly to be

strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God [1] my exceeding

[1] *the gladness of my joy.*

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foul, to be rancid, to stink: then, to be loathsome or abominable; and then, to treat or regard anything as such. Comp. Hosea viii. 3, 5; Isa. xix. 6. ¶ *Why go I mourning*, etc. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 9. This expression, with others of a similar character, renders it moral'v .rtain that this psalm was composed by the same person, and with reference to the same circumstances, as the former.

3. *O send out thy light and thy truth.* Send them forth as from thy presence; or, let them be made manifest. The word *light* here is equivalent to favour or mercy, as when one prays for the "*light* of God's countenance" (see Notes on Ps. iv. 6); and the idea is, that now, in the time of darkness and trouble, when the light of God's countenance seemed to be withdrawn or hidden, he prays that God would impart light; that he would restore his favour; that he would conduct him back again to his former privileges. The word *truth* here is equivalent to *truthfulness* or *faithfulness*; and the prayer is, that God would manifest his faithfulness to him as one of his own people, by restoring him to the privileges and blessings from which he had been unjustly driven. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxv. 5. ¶ *Let them lead me.* That is, Let them lead me back to my accustomed privileges; let me go under their guidance to the enjoyment of the blessings connected with the place of public worship. ¶ *Let them bring me unto thy holy hill.* Mount Zion; the place where the worship of God was then celebrated, and hence called the "holy hill" of God. ¶ *And to thy tabernacles.* The *tabernacle* was the sacred tent erected for the worship of God (see Notes on Ps. xv. 1), and was regarded as the place where Jehovah had his abode. The tabernacle was divided, as the temple was afterwards, into two parts or rooms, the holy and the most holy place (see Notes on Heb. ix. 1–5); and hence the *plural* term, *tabernacles*, might be employed in speaking of it. The language here implies, as in Ps. xlii., that the author of the psalm was now exiled or banished from this, and hence also it may be inferred that the two psalms were composed by the same author, and with reference to the same occasion. If the reference here, moreover, is to Mount Zion as the "holy hill," it may be observed that this would fix the composition of the psalm to the time of David, as *before* his time that was not the place of the worship of God, but was made "holy" by his removing the ark there. *After* his time the place of worship was removed to Mount Moriah, where the temple was built. It cannot be *demonstrated*, however, with absolute certainty that the reference here is to Mount Zion, though that seems in every way probable. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 6; iii. 4; comp. 2 Sam. v. 7–9; vi. 17.

4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God.* The altar on Mount Zion, where sacrifices were offered: 2 Sam. vi. 17. The meaning is, that he would again unite with others in the public and customary worship of God. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlii. 4. ¶ *Unto God.* Into the immediate presence of God; the place where he was worshipped. ¶ *My exceeding joy.* Marg., *the gladness of my joy.* The LXX. render this, "who makes my youth joyous:" or, "the joy of my youth," (*Thompson.*) The Hebrew is, *the gladness of my joy*; meaning, that God was the source of his joy, so that he found all his happiness in Him. ¶ *Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2, 3. Instru-

joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.

5 Why *f* art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

f Ps. xlii. 5, 11.

ments of music were commonly used in the worship of God, and David is represented as excelling in the music of the harp. Comp. 1 Sam. xvi. 16–23. ¶ *O God, my God.* It was not merely God as such that he desired to worship, or to whom he now appealed, but God *as his God*, the God to whom he had devoted himself, and whom he regarded as his God even in affliction and trouble. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 1.

5. *Why art thou cast down?* etc. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 5, 11. The sameness of this verse with vers. 5 and 11 of Ps. xlii. proves, as has been already remarked, that this psalm was composed by the same writer, and with reference to the same subject as the former. The doctrine which is taught is the same—that we should not be dejected or cast down in the troubles of life, but should hope in God, and look forward to better times, if not in this world, certainly in the world to come. If we are his children, we *shall* "yet praise him;" we shall acknowledge him as the "health" or the *salvation* (Heb.) of our countenance; as one who by giving "salvation" diffuses joy over our countenance; as one who will manifest himself as our God. He who has an eternity of blessedness before him,—he who is to dwell for ever in a world of peace and joy,—he who is soon to enter an abode where there will be no sin, no sadness, no tears, no death,—he who is to commence a career of glory which is never to terminate and never to change,—should *not* be cast down,—should *not* be overwhelmed with sorrow.

PSALM XLIV.

The *title* of this psalm, "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil," is the same as the title prefixed to Ps. xlii., except with a slight transposition. See Notes on the title to Ps. xlii. This does not, however, prove that the psalm was by the same author; or that it was composed on the same occasion; or that the design and the contents of the two resemble each other; but merely that they were alike submitted, for the same purpose, to those descendants of the family of Korah who were employed in regulating the music of the sanctuary. It may be true, indeed, that the psalm was composed *by* one of the descendants of Korah, or one who had the charge of the music, but that is not made certain by the title.

There is no way in which the authorship can be determined. It does not belong to the general division of the book of Psalms which is ascribed to David (Ps. i.–xli.); and though there can be no doubt that a large number of the psalms in the other portions of the book were composed by him, yet it is impossible now to ascertain which were his, except as his *name* is prefixed to a psalm; while the fact that his name is *not* so prefixed may be regarded as a proof that, in the belief of those who arranged the collection, it was not his composition. That he *may* have been the author of some of those which are ascribed to no particular writer is unquestionable, but there is nothing *in* this psalm which would indicate particularly that it was a psalm of David. We cannot hope, therefore, now to ascertain the name of the author.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is also wholly unknown, and conjecture is useless. There are no circumstances mentioned in the psalm which will enable us to determine with certainty when it was composed. Many occasions, however, occurred in the history of the Jews to which the sentiments contained in it are applicable; but there is no one of those occasions to which the psalm is so *peculiarly and exclusively* applicable that it can be assigned to that with undoubted certainty. The consequence is, that different expositors have assigned the composition of it to very different occasions. Not a few have referred it to the time of Antiochus

Epiphanes, and to the persecutions which occurred under him. Calvin, Venema, Dathe, and Rosenmüller adopt this view. De Wette supposes that the reference is to the time before the Babylonian exile, either in the reign of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar first invaded the land (2 Kings xxiv. 1), or in the reign of Jehoiachin, when the land was again invaded by him, 2 Kings xxiv. 10. Tholuck supposes that it refers either to the time of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. xxxvi. 9), or to the time of Zedekiah (2 Chron. xxxvi. 11), when the land was invaded by the Babylonians, and when the Captivity commenced. Prof. Alexander supposes that there is nothing in the psalm which makes it necessary to suppose that it refers to a later period than the time of David.

What is manifest in the psalm itself in regard to the occasion of its composition is, (1) that it was a season of defeat and disaster, when the armies of Israel were discomfited, vers. 9, 10; (2) that their armies and people were scattered among the heathen, and that the people were "sold" among them, vers. 11, 12; (3) that they were made a reproach and a by-word among surrounding nations, vers. 13, 14; (4) that this discomfiture and disgrace had befallen them in some place which might be called "the place of dragons," ver. 19; and (5) that this had occurred at some time when the author of the psalm, speaking in the name of the people, could say that it was not on account of prevailing idolatry, or because, as a people, they had "stretched out their hands to a strange god," vers. 17, 18, 20.

Perhaps it will be found, on an examination of the psalm, that all the circumstances accord better with the time of Josiah, and especially the close of his reign (2 Kings xxiii. 26-30; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-27), and the commencement of the reign following (2 Kings xxiii. 31-37; xxiv. 1), than with any other period of the history of the Hebrew people. This was the beginning of the calamities that came upon the nation in the period immediately preceding the Babylonish captivity; it was a time when the nation was free, as far as the efforts of a pious king could accomplish it, from prevailing idolatry; and yet it was a time when that series of disasters commenced which resulted in the entire removal of the nation to Babylon. There is not the slightest internal evidence that the psalm has reference to the times of the Maccabees; there were no historical facts in the time of David to which it can be easily applied; but all the circumstances in the psalm would find a fulfilment in the events which just preceded the Babylonish captivity, and in the series of national disasters which commenced with the defeat and death of Josiah.

The psalm is an earnest appeal to God to interpose amid the calamities of the nation, and to arise for their defence and deliverance. It consists of the following parts:—

I. An allusion to former national blessings in the tradition which had come down from ancient times respecting the Divine interposition in behalf of the nation when it was in danger, and when God delivered it from its foes, vers. 1-8. This reference to the past is evidently designed to be an argument or a reason for expecting and imploring the Divine interposition in the present period of national darkness and calamity. The fact that God *had* interposed in similar circumstances was an argument which might be urged why he should do so again.

II. The condition of the nation described, vers. 9-16. It was a time of national calamity. God had cast the nation off, and went forth no more with their hosts. Their armies were turned back and plundered; the people were sold into slavery, they were made a reproach and a by-word among the nations of the earth.

III. The statement that whatever might be the reason why all this had come upon them, it was not on account of national defection, or the prevalence of idolatry, or because they had forgotten God, vers. 17-22. The idea is that there was a prevailing desire in the nation to serve God, and that this was to be regarded as a calamity coming upon the people of God *as such;* their sufferings were endured in the cause of true religion, or because they *were* the people of God. This furnishes a ground of appeal that God would interpose in their behalf; or that he would vindicate them and his own cause.

IV. An earnest appeal to God to aid and save them, vers. 23-26.

PSALM XLIV.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah. Maschil.

WE have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

2 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; *how* thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

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1. *We have heard with our ears.* That is, it has been handed down by tradition. ¶ *Our fathers have told us.* Our ancestors. They have delivered it down from generation to generation. The word rendered "*told*" means properly to grave, or to insculp on a stone; and thence, to write. Then it comes to mean to number, to count, to recount, to tell, to declare. The *word* would be applicable to any method of making the thing known, either by hieroglyphic figures in sculpture, by writing, or by oral tradition, though it seems probable that the latter mode is particularly referred to here. Comp. Ex. x. 2; xii. 26, 27. ¶ What *work thou didst in their days.* The great work which thou didst accomplish for them; or, how thou didst interpose in their behalf. The reference is to what God accomplished for them in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, and bringing them into the land of Canaan. ¶ *In the times of old.* In ancient times; in the beginning of our history. The idea here is, that we may properly appeal to the past—to what God has done in former ages—as an argument for his interposition in similar circumstances now; for, (*a*) His former interposition showed his *power* to save; (*b*) it was such an illustration of his *character* that we may appeal to that as a reason for asking him to interpose again.

2. How *thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand.* The word rendered *heathen* means simply *nations* without necessarily conveying the idea of *heathenism*, as that word is now understood. It means the *nations*, to wit, of the land of Canaan, or the Canaanites; and as these nations were *in fact* idolaters, or strangers to the true religion, the word came in time to have that idea attached to it. It is in that sense that we use the term now, though the word *nations* would accurately express the meaning of the original. The word rendered *drive out*—יָרַשׁ, *yarash*—means properly to take, seize, or take possession of; and then, in the form here used (*Hiphil*), it means to cause to possess; to give possession of; and then, to *take* possession of, to drive out of a possession, to *dispossess*, to *disinherit.* The meaning here is, he dispossessed them of their country; he disinherited them. This, the psalmist says, God had done "by his hand;" that is, it was by his own power. ¶ *And plantedst them.* That is, planted *his people*—the children of Israel. He put them in the place of those whom he had disinherited or dispossessed. The word is properly applicable to a tree, but it is also used with reference to a nation, and means that he assigned them a fixed and permanent residence. Thus we say in English, "to plant a colony." Comp. Amos ix. 15; Jer. xxiv. 6; xxxii. 41; Ps. lxxx. 8; 2 Sam. vii. 10. ¶ How *thou didst afflict the people.* That is, the people of the land of Canaan; the nations that dwelt there. The word means to bring evil or calamity upon any one. ¶ *And cast them out.* The word here used may be taken in the sense of sending out or expelling, as in Gen. iii. 23; 1 Kings ix. 7,—and then it would be applicable to the *Canaanites*, as meaning that God had expelled or *driven them out*—as it is understood by our translators; or it may be used to denote the sending out of shoots or branches by a tree or vine, as in Ps. lxxx. 11; Jer. xvii. 8; Ezek. xvii. 6, 7,—and then it would refer here to the *Israelites*, and would mean that God *caused them to in-*

3 For [g] they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because [h] thou hadst a favour unto them.

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy

[g] Jos. xxiv. 13. [h] Deut. iv. 37.

crease; multiplied them; spread them over the land, as a vine spreads, Ps. lxxx. 8–11. The parallelism here clearly demands the latter interpretation. So it is understood by Luther, De Wette, Tholuck, and Prof. Alexander.

3. *For they got not the land in possession.* The land of Canaan. The design of this verse is to illustrate the sentiment in the previous verse, that they owed their establishment in the promised land wholly to God. The fact that *He* had interposed in their behalf; that *He* had shown that he was able to discomfit their enemies, is appealed to as a reason why he should now interpose in a time of national danger and calamity. He who had driven out the nations in the days of their fathers; he who had established his people peaceably in the land from which the former inhabitants had been expelled, was able to interpose now and save them. The prominent thought in all this is, that it was *God* who had accomplished all that had been done. That same God was able to save them again. ¶ *By their own sword.* That is, it was not owing to their valour, but to the Divine power: Deut. viii. 10–18; ix. 3–6; Josh. xxiv. 12. ¶ *Neither did their own arm save them.* Not their own strength or prowess. ¶ *But thy right hand.* The right hand is mentioned because it is that which is employed in wielding the sword or the spear in battle. ¶ *And the light of thy countenance.* Thy favour. It was because thou didst lift upon them the light of thy countenance, or because thou didst favour them. See Notes on Ps. iv. 6. ¶ *Because thou hadst a favour unto them.* Thou didst desire to show them favour; thou hadst pleasure in them. The idea in the Hebrew word is that of delighting in anything, or having pleasure in it.

4. *Thou art my King, O God.* Literally, "Thou art He, my King, O God;" that is, Thou art the same:—the same King, and the same God, who didst interpose in the time of the fathers, and thou art he whom *I* recognise as King, as the Sovereign Ruler of thy people. The psalmist here uses the singular number, "*my* King," as expressive of his own feelings, though he doubtless means also to speak in the name of the people. It would seem not improbable from this, that the author of the psalm was the reigning monarch in the time of the troubles referred to. If not, it was evidently one who personated him, and who meant to represent his feelings. The language shows the strong confidence of the author of the psalm in God, and perhaps also is designed to express his personal responsibility at the time, and his consciousness that his only refuge in conducting the troubled affairs of the nation was God. ¶ *Command deliverances for Jacob.* As if all was under His command, and He had only to give direction, and salvation would come. The word *Jacob* here is used to denote the descendants of Jacob, or the people of God. See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 6.

5. *Through thee.* By thy help. ¶ *Will we push down our enemies.* The word here rendered *push down* means literally to strike or push with the horns, spoken of horned animals, Ex. xxi. 28, 31, 32. Then it is applied to a conqueror prostrating nations before him: Deut. xxxiii. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 11. ¶ *Through thy name.* That is, acting under thine authority and by thy help. If he gave the commandment (ver. 4), it would be certain that they would be

name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

6 For [i] I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to [k] shame that hated us.

8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

9 But thou hast cast [l] off, and

i Hos. i. 7. *k* Ps. cxxxii. 18. *l* Ps. lxxiv. 1; Lam. iii. 31, 32.

able to overcome their adversaries. ¶ *Will we tread them under.* Will we conquer or subdue them. The language is taken from the custom of treading on a prostrate foe. See Notes on Ps. vii. 5; xviii. 40; comp. Notes on Job xl. 12; Isa. x. 6; lxiii. 3; Dan. vii. 23. ¶ *That rise up against us.* Our enemies that have mustered their strength for war. The language would *properly* denote those who had rebelled against a government; but it seems here to be used in a more general sense, as referring to those who had waged war against them. See Ps. xviii. 39.

6. *For I will not trust in my bow.* The author of the psalm himself again speaks as expressing his own feelings, and stating the grounds of his confidence and hope. Comp. ver. 4. At the same time he doubtless expresses the feelings of the people, and speaks in their name. He had said (ver. 3) that the ancestors of the Jewish people had not obtained possession of the promised land by any strength or skill of their own, and he now says that he, and those who were connected with him, did not depend on their own strength, or on the weapons of war which they might employ, but that their only ground of trust was God.

7. *But thou hast saved us from our enemies.* That is, Thou hast done it in times past. Thou hast interposed in behalf of our nation in periods of danger and trial, and hast delivered us. This is stated as a reason for what is said by the psalmist in ver. 6,—that he would not trust in his sword and in his bow,—and for the earnest appeal which he now makes to God. He and his people did not rely on their own strength and prowess, but on that God who had often interposed to save the nation. ¶ *And hast put them to shame that hated us.* In former times. That is, he had caused them to be discomfited. He had turned them back. He had covered them with confusion. On the meaning of the words *shame* and *ashamed*, see Notes on Job vi. 20; Ps. xxxiv. 5.

8. *In God we boast all the day long.* That is, continually or constantly. It is not a momentary or temporary expression of our feelings, but it is our habitual and constant employment. We have no other ground of reliance, and we express that reliance constantly. The word rendered *boast* here rather more literally means *praise:* "In God we *praise* all the day long." The *idea* is, that he was their only ground of confidence. They ascribed all their former successes to him; they had no other reliance now. ¶ *And praise thy name for ever.* We do it now; we shall never cease to do it. ¶ *Selah.* On the meaning of this word, see Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

9. *But thou hast cast off.* The author of the psalm now commences a description of the existing circumstances of the nation, so strongly in contrast with what had existed in former times when God interposed in their behalf, and when he gave them success. This is properly the commencement of the second part of the psalm, and the description is continued to ver. 16. The Hebrew word here rendered "hast cast off" implies disgust and abhorrence, as the casting away of that which is loathsome. See the word explained in the Notes on Ps. xliii. 2. The reference is to what had occurred at the time when the psalm was written. See introduction to this psalm. The allu-

put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

10 Thou makest us to turn back [m] from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

11 Thou hast given us [1] like sheep *appointed* for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

12 Thou sellest [n] thy people

m Lev. xxvi. 17; Deut. xxviii. 25, 64.

[1] *as sheep of meat.* *n* Deut. xxxii. 30.

sion is to the invasion of the land by foreigners; their own discomfiture in their wars; and the calamities consequent on these invasions and defeats. ¶ *And put us to shame.* By defeat and disgrace. See the word explained above, ver. 7. For the defeat and discomfiture supposed to be referred to, see 2 Chron. xxxv. 20–27; xxxvi. 5, 6. ¶ *And goest not forth with our armies.* See the places referred to above. Thus Josiah was defeated and slain; and thus the land was conquered by the invaders.

10. *Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy.* Instead of giving us the victory. That is, we are defeated. ¶ *And they which hate us spoil for themselves.* They plunder us; they take our property as spoil, and carry it away. That this was *done* at the time referred to in the introduction as the time of the composition of the psalm, is apparent from the narrative in the Book of Chronicles. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 7, "Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon." Comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 33; xxiv. 13–16; xxv. 13–17.

11. *Thou hast given us like sheep* appointed *for meat.* Marg., as in Heb., *as sheep of meat.* That is, as sheep are killed for food, so thou hast allowed us to be put to death. ¶ *And hast scattered us among the heathen.* Among the surrounding nations. See Notes on ver. 2. That is, they had been discomfited in war; many had fled into surrounding countries; many had been carried away captive. All this undoubtedly occurred at the time at which I have supposed that the psalm was written—the time immediately preceding the Babylonish captivity.

12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought.* Marg., *without riches.* Without gain, or advantage; that is, for no price that would be an equivalent. The people were given up to their enemies, but there was nothing in return that would be of equal value. The loss was in no way made up. They were taken away from their country and their homes. They were withdrawn from useful labour in the land; there was a great diminution of the national strength and of the national wealth; but there was no *return* to the land, no advantage, no valuable result, that would be an *equivalent* for thus withdrawing them from their country and their homes. It was as though they had been *given away.* A case *may* be supposed where the exile of a part of a people might be an advantage to a land, or where there would be a full equivalent for the loss sustained, as when soldiers go forth to defend their country, and to repel a foe, rendering a higher service than they could by remaining at home; or as when colonists go forth and settle in a new region, producing valuable returns in commerce; or as when missionaries go forth among the heathen, often producing, by a reflex influence, effects on the piety and prosperity of the churches at home, more important, and more widely diffused, than would have been produced by their remaining to labour in their own country. But no such valuable results occurred here. The idea is that they were *lost* to their homes; to their country; to the cause of religion. It is not *necessary* to suppose that the psalmist here means to say that the people had been literally *sold* into slavery, although it is not in itself improbable that this had occurred. All that the words necessarily imply would be that the effect was *as if* they were sold into bondage. In Deut. xxxii. 30; Judges ii. 14; iii. 8; iv. 2,

[1] for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.

13 Thou makest us a reproach [o] to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

15 My confusion *is* continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,

[1] *without riches.* o Jer. xxiv. 9.

9; x. 7, the word here used is employed to express the fact that God delivered his people into the hand of their enemies. Any *removal* into the territories of the heathen would be a fact corresponding with all that is conveyed by the language used. There can be little doubt, however, that (at the time referred to) those who were made captives in war were *literally* sold as slaves. This was a common custom. Comp. Notes on Isa. lii. 3. ¶ *And dost not increase* thy wealth *by their price.* The words "thy wealth" are supplied by the translators; but the idea of the psalmist is undoubtedly expressed with accuracy. The meaning is, that no good result to the cause of religion, no corresponding returns had been the consequence of thus giving up the people into the hand of their enemies. This *may*, however, be rendered, as De Wette translates it, "thou hast not enhanced their price;" that is, God had not set a high price on them, but had sold them for too little, or had given them away for nothing. But the former idea seems better to suit the connexion, and to convey more exactly the meaning of the original. So it is rendered in the Chaldee, and by Luther.

13. *Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxix. 8. The word *neighbours* here refers to surrounding people or nations. They were reproached, scorned, and derided as forsaken by God, and given up to their foes. They no longer commanded the admiration of mankind as a prosperous, favoured, happy people. Surrounding nations treated them with contempt as inspiring no fear, and as having nothing to entitle them to respect.

14. *Thou makest us a byword among the heathen.* The word rendered byword — מָשָׁל, *mashal*—means properly a similitude or parable; then, a sententious saying, and apophthegm; then, a proverb; then, a song or verse, particularly a satirical song, or a song of derision. The idea here is, that they were made a *proverb*, or were referred to as a striking instance of the Divine abandonment, or as something marked to which the nations might and did refer as an *example* of calamity, judgment, misfortune, failure; a warning to all. See Deut. xxviii. 37. ¶ *A shaking of the head among the people.* An *occasion* for the shaking of the head, in derision and scorn. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 7.

15. *My confusion* is *continually before me.* My shame; the conviction and the evidence of my disgrace is constantly present with me. Literally, "all the day my shame is before me." That is, the evidences of disgrace, defeat, and disaster, rendering him a reproach to the nations, were everywhere around him, and he could not conceal them from himself. The psalmist here is represented as the head of the people, and expresses the sense of disgrace which the sovereign of a people would feel in a time of national calamity; identifying himself with the people, he speaks of the national disgrace as his own. ¶ *And the shame of my face.* The shame that is manifested on the countenance when we blush. ¶ *Hath covered me.* That is, I am suffused with the evidence of my shame; or, as we sometimes say, "he blushed *all over.*" The blush, however—that peculiar rush of blood manifesting itself through the skin—which constitutes the evidence of shame, is confined to the face and the neck;—an arrange-

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy [p] and avenger.

[p] Ps. viii. 2.

17 All [q] this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

[q] Dan. ix. 13.

ment which none can explain, except on the supposition that there is a God; that he is a moral governor; and that, as it was designed that the body should be covered or clothed, he *meant* that the evidence of guilt should manifest itself on the parts of the person which are most exposed to view, or where others could *see* it. The idea here is, that he could not conceal the proofs of his shame and disgrace; he was compelled to exhibit them to all around.

16. *For the voice of him*, etc. That is, Because I hear the voice of him that reproaches and blasphemes. The word rendered *blasphemeth*, means properly to use cutting words; then, to reproach or revile. It may be applied either to men or to God. In the former case, it means reproach or reviling; in the latter, blasphemy in the usual sense of that term, denoting reproachful words concerning God. The word *may* be used here in both these senses, as it is evident that not only were the *people* the subject of reproach, but that *God* was also. ¶ *By reason of the enemy.* That is, the foreign enemies, or those who had invaded the land. ¶ *And avenger.* Of him who had come to take vengeance. Here the word refers to the foreign enemies of the nation, and to the spirit by which they were actuated; their purposes to avenge themselves of what they regarded as wrongs, or take vengeance on a nation which they had long hated. Comp. Notes on Ps. viii. 2.

17. *All this is come upon us.* All these calamities. The connecting thought here is, that *although* all these things had come upon them, yet they could not be traced to their own infidelity or unfaithfulness to God. There was nothing in the national character, there were no circumstances at that time existing, there was no peculiar unfaithfulness among the people, there was no such general forgetfulness of God, and no such general prevalence of idolatry as would account for what had occurred, or as would explain it. The nation was not then more deeply depraved than it had been at other times; but, on the contrary, there was among the people a prevalent regard for God and for his service. It was, therefore, a mystery to the author of the psalm, that these calamities had been suffered to come upon them at that time; it was an event the cause of which he desired to search out, ver. 21. ¶ *Yet have we not forgotten thee.* As a nation. That is, there was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the nation at that time which would call down the Divine displeasure. We cannot suppose that the psalmist means to claim for the nation entire perfection, but only to affirm that the nation at that time was not characterised by any *peculiar* forgetfulness of God, or prevalence of wickedness. All that is here said was true at the time when, as I have supposed, the psalm was written—the closing part of the reign of Josiah, or the period immediately following. ¶ *Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.* We have not been unfaithful to thy covenant; to the covenant which thou didst make with our fathers; to the commandments which thou hast given us. This can only mean that there was no such *prevailing* departure from the principles of that covenant as could account for this. The psalmist could not connect the existing state of things—the awful and peculiar discomfitures and calamities which had come upon the nation—with anything peculiar in the character of the people, or in the religious condition of the nation.

18 Our heart is not turned back, [r] neither have our [1] steps declined from thy way;

19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, [s] and covered us with the shadow [t] of death.

20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or [u] stretched out our hands to a strange god;

r Job xxiii. 11, 12; Ps. cxix. 157.
1 Or, *goings*.
s Isa. xxxv. 7. t Ps. xxiii. 4.
u Job xxxi. 26—28.

18. *Our heart is not turned back.* That is, We have not turned away from thy service; we have not apostatized from thee; we have not fallen into idolatry. This must mean that such was not at that time the *characteristic* of the nation; it was not a *prominent* thing among the people; there was no such general and pervading iniquity as to explain the fact that these calamities had come upon them, or to be properly the *cause* of these troubles. ¶ *Neither have our steps declined from thy way.* Marg., *goings*. The idea as expressed by our translators is, that the people had not departed from the path prescribed by God; that is, from what he required in his law. The LXX. and the Vulgate render it, "Thou hast turned our steps from thy way;" that is, though our heart is not turned back, and we have not revolted from thee, yet thou hast turned our steps from thy way, or hast turned us from the way of thy favour and from prosperity. The rendering in the common version, however, is more in conformity with the idea in the original.

19. *Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons.* Or rather, "That thou hast crushed us in the place of dragons." The connexion is continued from the previous verse: "Our heart is not so turned back, nor have our steps so declined from thy path, that thou shouldst crush us in the place of dragons." That is, we have been guilty of no such apostasy and infidelity as to account for the fact that thou hast dealt with us in this manner, or make it necessary and proper that we should thus be crushed and overthrown. The word rendered *dragons*—תַּנִּים, *tannim*—means either a great fish; a sea monster; a serpent; a dragon; or a crocodile. See Notes on Isa. xiii. 22. It may also mean a jackal, a fox, or a wolf. De Wette renders it here *jackals*. The *idea* in the passage is essentially the same, whichever interpretation of the word is adopted. The "*place* of dragons" would denote the place where such monsters are found, or where they had their abode;—that is to say, in desolate places; wastes; deserts; old ruins; depopulated towns. See Notes, as above, on Isa. xiii. 19–22; comp. Jer. ix. 11. The meaning here would be, therefore, that they had been vanquished; that their cities and towns had been reduced to ruins; that their land had been laid waste; that the place where they had been "sore broken" was in fact a fit abode for wild beasts and monsters. ¶ *And covered us with the shadow of death.* Our land has been covered with a dark and dismal shade, as if *Death* had cast his image or shadow over it. See Notes on Job iii. 5 and Ps. xxiii. 4. There could be no more striking illustration of calamity and ruin.

20. *If we have forgotten the name of our God.* That is, if we have apostatized from him. ¶ *Or stretched out our hands to a strange god.* Or have been guilty of idolatry. The act of stretching out the hands, or spreading forth the hands, was significant of worship or prayer: 1 Kings viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12, 13; see Notes on Isa. i. 15. The *idea* here is, that this was *not* the cause or reason of their calamities; that if this had occurred, it *would have been* a sufficient reason for what had taken place; but that no such cause actually existed, and therefore the reason must

21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

22 Yea, [v] for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

23 Awake, why sleepest thou,

[v] Rom. viii. 36.

be found in something else. It was the fact of such calamities having come upon the nation when no such cause existed, that perplexed the author of the psalm, and led to the conclusion in his own mind (ver. 22) that these calamities were produced by the malignant designs of the enemies of the true religion, and that, instead of their suffering for their national sins, they were really *martyrs* in the cause of God, and were suffering for his sake.

21. *Shall not God search this out?* That is, If this had been the case, it would be known to God. If, as a nation, we had been given to idolatry, or if our hearts had been secretly alienated from the true God, though there had been no open manifestation of apostasy, yet that could not have been concealed from him. The question here asked implies a solemn declaration on the part of the psalmist that this was not so; or that there was no such national apostasy from God, and no such prevalence of idolatry in the land as to account for what had occurred. The reason for the calamities which had come upon them, therefore, must be found in something else. ¶ *For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* What is in the heart: what is concealed from the world. If there were any such alienation from him in the hearts of the people, he would know it. The fact that God knows the heart, or that he understands all the secret thoughts, purposes, and motives of men, is one that is everywhere affirmed in the Scriptures. See 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Rom. viii. 27; comp. Notes on Rev. ii. 23.

22. *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long.* That is, we are *continually* or *constantly* subjected to these calamities. It is not a single defeat, but it is a continued slaughter. This verse contains, in the apprehension of the psalmist, the true cause of the calamities which had come upon the nation. The emphasis in the passage lies in the phrase "*for thy sake.*" The meaning is, It is on thy account; it is in thy cause; it is because we are thy friends, and because we worship thee. It is not on account of our national sins; it is not because there is any prevalent idolatry, but it is *because* we are the worshippers of the true God, and we are, therefore, *martyrs.* All these calamities have come upon us in consequence of our attachment to thee. There is no evidence that there was any self-glorying in this, or any intention to blame God as if he were unjust or severe, but it is the feeling of martyrs as suffering in the cause of religion. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul to Christians in his time, as fitly describing their sufferings, and the cause of the calamities which came upon them. See Notes on Rom. viii. 36. ¶ *We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.* We are *reckoned* like sheep designed for the slaughter. That is, It is not because we are *guilty,* but we are regarded and treated *as innocent sheep* who are driven to be slaughtered. See Notes on Rom. viii. 36. Their attachment to the true religion,—their devotion to Jehovah as the true God,—was the secret cause of all the calamities which had come upon them. As a nation they were his friends, and as such they were opposed by the worshippers of other gods.

23. *Awake, why sleepest thou?* This is a solemn and earnest appeal to God to interpose in their behalf, *as if* he were "asleep," or were regardless of their sufferings. Comp.

O Lord? arise, cast [w] *us* not off for ever.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, *and* forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

[w] ver. 9.

25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

26 Arise [1] for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

[1] *a help for us.*

Notes on Ps. iii. 7; vii. 6; xxxv. 23. ¶ *Arise, cast* us *not off for ever.* Do not forsake us always. Comp. ver. 9. He had *seemed* to have cast them off; to have forgotten them; to have forsaken them utterly, and the psalmist, in the name of the people, calls on him not entirely to abandon them.

24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face?* See Notes on Ps. xiii. 1. Why dost thou turn away from us, and refuse to aid us, and leave us to these unpitied sufferings? ¶ And *forgettest our affliction and our oppression.* Our trials, and the wrongs that are committed against us. These are earnest appeals. They are the pleadings of the oppressed and the wronged. The language is such as man would use in addressing his fellow-men; and, when applied to God, it must be understood *as* such language. As used in the Psalms it denotes earnestness, but not irreverence; it is solemn petition, not dictation; it is affectionate pleading, not complaint. It indicates depth of suffering and distress, and is the strongest language which could be employed to denote entire helplessness and dependence. At the same time, it is language which implies that the cause for which they suffered was the cause of God, and that they might *properly* call on him to interfere in behalf of his own friends.

25. *For our soul is bowed down to the dust.* That is, We are overborne with calamity, so that we sink to the earth. The expression is one that denotes great affliction. ¶ *Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.* We are like animals that are prone upon the earth, and that cannot rise. The allusion may be to reptiles that cannot stand erect. The figure is intended to denote great prostration and affliction.

26. *Arise for our help.* Marg., as in Heb., *a help for us.* That is, Deliver us from our present calamities and troubles. ¶ *And redeem us.* Save us; deliver us. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 22; xxxi. 5; Isa. i. 27; lii. 3. ¶ *For thy mercies' sake.* On account of thy mercies. That is, in order that thy mercy may be manifested; or that thy character, as a God of mercy, may be made known. It was not primarily or mainly on their own account that the psalmist urges this prayer; it was that the character of God might be made known, or that it might be seen that he was a merciful Being. The proper manifestation of the Divine character, as showing what God *is*, is in itself of more importance than our personal salvation,—for the welfare of the universe depends on *that;* and the highest ground of appeal and of hope which we can have, as sinners, when we come before him, is that he would glorify himself in his mercy. To that we may appeal, and on that we may rely. When that is urged as an argument for our salvation, and when that is the sole ground of our confidence, we may be assured that he is ready to hear and to save us. In the New Testament he has told us *how* that mercy has been manifested, and *how* it may be made available to us,—to wit, through the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator; and hence we are directed to come in his name, and to make mention of what he has done and suffered in order that the Divine mercy may be *consistently* manifested to men. From the beginning of the world,—from the time when man apostatized from God,—through all dispensations, and in all ages and lands, the only hope of men

for salvation has been the fact that God *is* a merciful Being; the true ground of successful appeal to him has been, is, and ever will be, that his own name might be glorified and honoured in the salvation of lost and ruined sinners—in the displays of his MERCY.

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is entitled "To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil. A song of love." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. The words "Upon Shoshannim" occur also, as a title, or part of a title, in Ps. lxix., lxxx.; and, in a different form, in the title to Ps. lx., "Shushan-eduth." The word *Shoshan*—שׁוֹשַׁן—occurs in 1 Kings vii. 22, 26; Cant. ii. 16; iv. 5; v. 13; vi. 2, 3; vii. 2; and, in a modified form—שׁוֹשַׁנָּה, *Shoshannah*—in 2 Chron. iv. 5; Cant. ii. 1, 2; Hos. xiv. 5; in all which it is rendered *lily*, or *lilies*. The word, therefore, probably means a lily; and then it came to denote, probably, a musical instrument that had a *resemblance* to a lily, or that was shaped like a lily. It is not known to what kind of musical instrument there is a reference, but it would seem probable that something like the trumpet or the cymbal was intended. The special reference here would seem to be to the chief musician who presided over *this part* of the musical instruments employed in public worship,—as it would seem not improbable that each of the different parts, as trumpets, horns, viols, harps, etc., would have a special leader. On the portion of the title, "for the sons of Korah,"—and on the word "*Maschil*,"—see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii. The portion of the title, "A Song of Loves," would properly denote a song devoted to love, or in celebration of love; that is, in which love would be the main idea. The phrase "a lovely song," or "a charming song," as Gesenius renders it here, would not, it seems to me, express the meaning of the original. An author would hardly prefix such a title to a psalm himself, as indicating that the psalm had special beauty, or was specially adapted to please; and if we suppose that the titles were prefixed by some other person than the author, or by common usage, it would be difficult to see why such a title should be prefixed to *this* psalm rather than to many others. It has, indeed, great beauty; but so have very many of the rest. If we suppose, however, that the title was prefixed as indicating the general subject of the psalm, or as indicating the feelings of the author towards the main persons referred to in it, the title is eminently appropriate. In this sense the title would be proper whether we regard the psalm as having reference to the Messiah, or as an epithalamium—a bridal or marriage hymn.

The author of the psalm is wholly unknown, and nothing can be determined on the subject, unless it be supposed that the portion of the title "for the sons of Korah," or "of the sons of Korah," conveys the idea that it was the composition of one of that family. On that point, see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii. That it *may* have been written by David no one can disprove, but there is no certain evidence that he was the author, and as his name is not mentioned, the presumption is that it is not his.

Very various opinions have been entertained in regard to the *reference* of the psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed. A very material question is, To whom does the psalm refer? And especially, Has it reference to the Messiah, and is it to be classed with the Messianic Psalms?

Nearly all the older Christian interpreters, without hesitation, suppose that it refers to the Messiah. This opinion has been held, also, by a large part of the modern interpreters of the Bible, among others by Michaelis, Lowth, Dathe, Rosenmüller (in his second edition), Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Professor Alexander. Many, however, have defended the opposite opinion, though they have not been agreed on the question *to whom* the psalm refers. Grotius, Dereser, and Kaiser suppose it to have been sung at the marriage of Solomon with a foreign princess, probably the daughter of the king of Egypt. Doederlein supposes the king whose praises are sung to be an Israelite. Augusti thinks that it was sung at the nuptials of a Persian king. This last opinion De Wette adopts.

On this question it may be remarked, (1.) There is no evidence that the psalm refers to David; and, indeed, from the psalm itself it is evident that it *could* not have such a reference. The term "O

God" (ver. 6) could not be applied to him, nor the expression "Thy throne is for ever and ever," *ibid.* In the life of David, moreover, there was no marriage with a foreign princess that would correspond with the statement here; and no occasion on which the "daughter of Tyre" was present with a gift, ver. 12.

(2.) It seems equally clear that the psalm does not refer to Solomon. In addition to the considerations already suggested as reasons why it does not refer to David, and which are as applicable in the main to Solomon as to him, it may be added that Solomon was never a warlike prince, and was never distinguished for conquests. But the "hero" of the psalm is a warrior—a prince who goes forth to conquest, and who would be distinguished for his victories over the enemies of the king, vers. 3-5.

(3.) For stronger reasons still the psalm cannot be supposed to refer to a Persian prince. Such a supposition is a mere conjecture, with not even the pretence that there are any historical facts that would justify such an application, and without even the suggestion as to a particular case to which it could be applicable. It is, moreover, wholly improbable that a nuptial ode designed to celebrate the marriage of a Persian king—a foreigner—would have been introduced into a book of sacred poetry among the Hebrews.

(4.) The remaining opinion, therefore, is, that the psalm had original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. For this opinion the following reasons may be assigned:—(*a*) The authority of the New Testament. If the Bible is an inspired book, then one part of it may properly be regarded as an authoritative interpretation of another; or a statement in one part must be admitted to be proof of what is meant in another, since the entire book has one *Author* only—the Holy Spirit. But there can be no doubt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews meant to quote this psalm as having reference to the Messiah, or as containing an *intended* statement in regard to him which might be appealed to as *proof* that he was divine. Thus, in ch. i. 8, 9, he quotes vers. 6, 7, of the psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," etc., *in proof* that the Son of God is superior to the angels. See Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the passage referred to, where this point is considered at length. There can be no doubt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews *meant* to quote the passage as having original reference to the Messiah; and his argument would have no force whatever on the supposition that the psalm had original reference to David, or to Solomon, or to a Persian prince.

(*b*) The testimony of tradition, or of early interpretation, is in favour of this supposition. Thus, the Chaldee Paraphrase (ver. 3) applies the psalm expressly to the Messiah: "Thy beauty, king Messiah—מַלְכָּא מְשִׁיחָא—is more excellent than the sons of men." This may not improperly be understood as representing the current opinion of the Hebrews at the time when the Chaldee interpretation was made, in regard to the design and reference of the psalm. The two eminent Jewish interpreters, Aben-Ezra and Kimchi, explain the psalm in the same manner, and may be supposed also to represent the prevailing mode of explaining it away among the Hebrews. On this point, also, the Epistle to the Hebrews may be referred to, as showing that such was the current explanation up to the time when that was written. I have referred to the fact that the author of that epistle quotes the psalm as an inspired man, and as thus furnishing the authority of inspiration in favour of this interpretation. I now refer to it as showing that this must have been the prevailing and well-understood opinion in regard to the design of the psalm. The author of the epistle was establishing by *argument*, not by *authority*, the claims of the Messiah to a rank above that of the angels. He made use of an argument which he evidently believed would have force among those who regarded the Old Testament as of Divine origin. But the argument which he used, and on which he relied, would have no weight with those for whom he wrote unless they admitted that the psalm *had* reference to the Messiah, and that this point might be assumed without further proof. The fact, therefore, that he thus quotes and applies the psalm demonstrates that such was its current and admitted interpretation in his time.

(*c*) The internal evidence may be referred to. This will be further illustrated in the Notes. At present it is necessary only to remark—(1.) That there are passages in this psalm which cannot be applied to any man—to any created being—and which can be applied only

to one who may properly be called God, ver. 6.—(2.) The characteristics of the principal personage in the psalm are such as accurately describe the Messiah. These points will be illustrated in the Notes.

(*d*) The psalm, on the supposition that it refers to the Messiah, is in accordance with a prevailing mode of writing in the Old Testament. See Notes on Heb. i. 8; comp. Introd. to Isaiah, § 7; and Introd. to Ps. xl. It is to be remembered that the expectation of a Messiah was the peculiar hope of the Jewish people. He is really the "*hero*" of the Old Testament,—more so than Achilles is of the Iliad, or Æneas of the Æneid. The sacred poets were accustomed to employ their most magnificent imagery in describing him, that they might present him in every form that was beautiful in conception, and that would be gratifying to the pride and the hopes of the nation. Everything that is gorgeous and splendid in description is lavished upon him. And they were never under any apprehension of attributing to him too high a rank, too great perfection of moral character, or too wide an extent of dominion. They freely applied to him language which would be a magnificent description of an earthly monarch; and the terms which usually denote splendid conquests, or a wide and permanent reign, are freely given to him. Under this view, and in this style, this psalm was evidently composed; and although the *language* may have been taken from the magnificence of the court of David or Solomon, or even from the splendour of a Persian king, yet there can be no reason to doubt that the description is that of the Messiah, and not of David or Solomon, or any Persian prince. The writer in the psalm imagines to himself a magnificent and beautiful prince,—a prince riding prosperously to his conquests; swaying a permanent sceptre over a wide empire; clothed in rich and splendid vestments; eminently upright and pure; and scattering blessings on every hand. That prince was the Messiah. He describes the queen—the bride of such a prince—as attended by the daughters of kings; as clad in the gold of Ophir; as greatly beloved by the prince; as glorious in her appearance and character; as having on robes of wrought gold and raiment of needlework; as followed by a numerous retinue; and as brought to the king in his palace. That queen is the "bride of the Lamb"—the church. All this is in the magnificent style of the Orientals, but all accords with the custom of the sacred writers in speaking of the Messiah.

(*e*) It may be added that this is in harmony with the constant language of the sacred writers in the New Testament, who speak of the Messiah as the "husband" of the church, and of the church as his "bride." Comp. Notes on Eph. v. 23—32; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xxi. 2, 9; xxii. 17.

The proof, therefore, seems to me to be conclusive that the psalm had original and sole reference to the Messiah.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. A statement of the purpose or design of the psalm. It is to speak of the things which the psalmist had meditated on respecting the "king;" some one in his view to whom that title was applicable, and whose praises he intended particularly to set forth, ver. 1.

II. A description of the king, vers. 2-9.
- (*a*) He is the fairest among men: distinguished for grace and beauty, ver. 2.
- (*b*) He is a warrior—a conqueror. He will go forth to conquest, and will be successful in overcoming his enemies, vers. 3-5.
- (*c*) His throne is the throne of God, and will endure for ever, ver. 6.
- (*d*) His character is eminently righteous, vers. 6, 7.
- (*e*) He is clad in robes of beauty; his garments are rich with perfumes; his attendants are the daughters of kings, vers. 8, 9.

III. A description of the queen, the bride, vers. 9-17.
- (*a*) She is clad in robes of gold,—the gold of Ophir, ver. 9.
- (*b*) She is entreated to forget her own people, and her father's house,—to become wholly devoted to him who had espoused her, assured that thus she would secure his heart, and be certain of his love, vers. 10, 11.
- (*c*) She would be honoured with the favour of the rich, and the attendance of foreign princesses, represented by the "daughter of Tyre;" Tyre, distinguished for wealth and splendour; Tyre, the representative of the commercial world, ver. 12.
- (*d*) The daughter of the king—the bride—is glorious and beautiful,

PSALM XLV.

To the chief Musician upon *x* Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, [1] Maschil. A song of loves.

MY heart [2] is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king; my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer *y* than the

x Ps. lxix., lxxx. [1] Or, *of instruction.*
[2] *boileth*, or, *bubbleth up*, *y* S. Song v. 9—16.

as seen "within" her own palace or dwelling, ver. 13.

(*e*) Her raiment is of wrought gold; of needlework of delicate finish and taste, vers. 13, 14.

(*f*) She is attended by virgins, her companions, who with her shall enter into the palace of the king, vers. 14, 15.

IV. An address to the king. He is to be honoured by his children, who will be more to him than even his ancestors. His praise will spring from those children rather than from the lustre and fame of his great progenitors. He will be remembered in all coming generations, and praised for ever and ever, vers. 16, 17. See Notes, ver. 16.

Such is the outline or substance of this exquisite specimen of sacred song,—this very beautiful Hebrew ode. It must be apparent, I think, at once, that it cannot be applied with propriety to either David, or Solomon, or to a Persian prince. How far it is applicable to the Messiah and the church; to him as the bridegroom, and to the church as a bride,—will be made apparent in the exposition of its particular words and phrases.

1. *My heart is inditing.* That is, *I* am engaged in inditing a good matter; though implying at the same time that it was a work of the *heart*—a work in which the heart was engaged. It was not a mere production of the intellect; not a mere work of skill; not a mere display of the beauty of song, but a work in which the *affections* particularly were engaged, and which would express the feelings of the heart:—the result or effusion of sincere *love*. The word rendered *is inditing*—רָחַשׁ, *rahhash*—is rendered in the margin, *boileth* or *bubbleth up*. It means properly to boil up or over, as a fountain; and the idea here is that his heart boiled over with emotions of love; it was full and overflowing; it found expression in the words of this song. The Hebrew word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. ¶ *A good matter.* Literally, *a good word*; that is, it was something which he was about to say which was *good*; something interesting, pure, important; not only a subject on which his heart was engaged, but also which was worthy of attention. ¶ *I speak of the things which I have made.* Literally, "I say my works to the king." That is, My work—that which I meditate and am about to compose—pertains to the king. ¶ *Touching the king. He* is to be the main subject of my song. Comp. Notes on Isa. v. 1. If the remarks made in the introduction to the psalm are correct, then the "king" here referred to was the future Messiah—the great personage to whom all the writers of the Old Testament looked forward, and whose glory they were so anxious to see and to describe. Comp. Notes on 1 Peter i. 10–12. ¶ *My tongue* is *the pen of a ready writer.* Let my tongue in speaking of him be as the pen of a rapid writer. That is, let my tongue rapidly and freely express my thoughts and feelings. The word rendered *pen*—עֵט, *ait*—means a *stylus*, usually made of iron, used for the purpose of inscribing letters on lead or wax. See Notes on Job xix. 24. The idea is that the psalmist's mind was full of his subject, and that he desired to express his thoughts in warm, free, gushing language—the language of overflowing emotion.

2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men.* That is, Thou art more fair and comely than men; thy comeliness is greater than that which is found among men. In other words, Thou art beautiful

children of men; grace [z] is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

[z] Luke iv. 22.

3 Gird thy sword [a] upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

[a] Heb. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16.

beyond any human standard or comparison. The language, indeed, would not necessarily imply that he was *not* a man, but it means that among all who dwell upon the earth there was none to be found that could be compared with him. The Hebrew word rendered "thou art fairer"—יָפְיְפִיתָ, *Yoph-ya-phitha*—is a very unusual term. It is properly a *reduplication* of the word meaning "beautiful," and thus means *to be very beautiful.* It would be well expressed by the phrase "Beautiful—beautiful—art thou above the children of men." It is the language of surprise,—of a sudden impression of beauty—beauty as it strikes at the first glance—such as the eye had never seen before. The impression here is that produced by the general appearance or aspect of him who is seen as king. Afterwards the attention is more particularly directed to the "grace that is poured into his lips." The *language* here would well express the emotions often felt by a young convert when he is first made to see the beauty of the character of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour: "Beautiful; beautiful, above all men." ¶ *Grace is poured into thy lips.* The word here rendered *is poured* means properly to pour, to pour out as liquids,—water, or melted metal: Gen. xxviii. 18; 2 Kings iv. 4. The meaning here is, that grace seemed to be *spread over* his lips; or that this was strikingly manifest on his lips. The word *grace* means properly favour; and then it is used in the general sense of benignity, kindness, mildness, gentleness, benevolence. The reference here is to his manner of speaking, as corresponding with the beauty of his person, and as that which particularly attracted the attention of the psalmist:—the mildness; the gentleness; the kindness; the persuasive eloquence of his words. It is hardly necessary to remark that this, in an eminent degree, was applicable to the Lord Jesus. Thus it is said (Luke iv. 22), "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the GRACIOUS words which proceeded out of his mouth." So John vii. 46: "Never man spake like this man." See also Matt. vii. 29; xiii. 54; Luke ii. 47. ¶ *Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.* In connexion with this moral beauty—this beauty of character—God will bless thee to all eternity. Since he has endowed thee with such gifts and graces, he will continue to bless thee for ever. In other words, it is impossible that one who is thus endowed should ever be an object of the Divine displeasure.

3. *Gird thy sword upon* thy *thigh.* That is, Arm or prepare thyself for battle and conquest. The Messiah is introduced here as a conquering king; as about to go forward to subdue the nations to himself; as about to set up a permanent kingdom. ¶ *O* most *mighty.* That is, Hero; Warrior; Conqueror. ¶ *With thy glory and thy majesty.* With the glory and majesty appropriate to thee; or which properly belong to thee. This is at the same time the expression of a *wish* on the part of the author of the psalm, and a *prophetic description.* The psalmist *desired* that he would thus go forth to the conquest of the world; and saw that he *would* do it. Comp. vers. 5, 6. It is needless to remark that this is easily and naturally applicable to the Messiah—the Lord Jesus—as going forth for the subjugation of the world to the authority of God. Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 25, 28. See also, in reference to the figure here used, Isa. xlix. 2; Heb. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16; xix. 15.

4 And in thy majesty [1] ride [b] prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible [c] things.

5 Thine arrows [d] *are* sharp in

[1] *prosper thou, ride thou.* [b] Rev. vi. 2. [c] Ps. lxv. 5. [d] Ps. xxxviii. 2.

4. *And in thy majesty ride prosperously.* Marg., *Prosper thou, ride thou.* The *majesty* here referred to is the glory or magnificence which became a prince of such rank, and going forth to such deeds. The prayer is, that he would go forth with the pomp and glory becoming one in that station. The word here used, rendered in the margin, "prosper thou," means properly to go over or through, to pass over, and may be correctly rendered here, *pass on;* that is, move forward to conquest. The word *ride* refers to the way in which warriors usually went forth to conquest in a chariot of war. The idea is that of one caparisoned for war, and with the glory appropriate to his rank as king, going forth to victory. This language is such as is often employed in the Scriptures to describe the Messiah as a conquering king. ¶ *Because of truth.* On account of truth; or in the cause of truth. That is, the great purpose of his conquests would be to establish a kingdom based on truth, in contradistinction from the existing kingdom of darkness as based on error and falsehood. The *object* of his conquests was to secure the reign of truth over the minds of men. Comp. John xviii. 37. ¶ *And meekness* and *righteousness.* Literally, *humility-righteousness;* or, humble right. It would be a kingdom or a conquest of righteousness, *not* established, as most kingdoms are, by pride and arrogance and mere power, but a dominion where humility, meekness, gentleness would be at the foundation—that on which the whole superstructure would be reared. Its characteristic would be *righteousness* or *justice,*—a righteousness and justice, however, not asserted and established by mere power, or by the pride of conquest, but which would be established and maintained by meekness or gentleness:—a kingdom not of outward pomp and power, but the reign of the gentle virtues in the heart. ¶ *And thy right hand.* The instrument of martial power and success; that which, in war, wields the sword and the spear. ¶ *Shall teach thee.* Shall guide thee, or lead thee to the performance of terrible things. ¶ *Terrible things.* Fearful deeds; things that are fitted to excite astonishment or wonder. They were such things as would be regarded as distinguished achievements in war, indicating extraordinary valour; such conquests as would strike the world with amazement. We have here, therefore, a description of the Messiah as going forth to the great conquest of the world; and at the same time we have this intimation of the nature of his kingdom, that however great the *power* which would be exerted in securing its conquests, it would be founded on *truth:*—it would be a kingdom where righteousness would prevail, and whose essential characteristic would be gentleness and peace.

5. *Thine arrows* are *sharp in the heart,* etc. Literally, *Thine arrows are sharp,—the people under thee shall fall,—in the heart of the enemies of the king.* The process of *thought* in the verse seems to be this: First. The *arrows* are seen as sharp or penetrating. Second. The *people* are seen falling as those arrows are shot forth. Third. It is seen that those who fall are the *enemies of the king,* and that the arrows have pierced the *heart.* The word *sharp* is applied to the arrows as denoting that they were adapted to *pierce.* Sometimes arrows are blunted, or with a thick head, rather adapted to smite with force than to wound by penetrating. The bow and the arrow were common instruments in ancient wars, and

the heart of the king's enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.

6 Thy throne, [e] O God, *is* for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.

[e] Ps. xciii. 2; Heb. i. 8.
[1] Or, *O God.*

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore [1] God, thy God, hath [f] anointed thee with the oil of [g] gladness above thy fellows.

8 All [h] thy garments *smell* of

[f] Isa. lxi. 1. [g] 1 Kings i. 39, 40.
[h] S. Song i. 3.

were mainly used by those who went forth to battle in a chariot. Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 34; 2 Kings ix. 21–24. As pertaining to the Messiah, the reference here is, of course, to the *truth*, and to the power of that truth in penetrating the hearts of men. Comp. Notes on Heb. iv. 12. ¶ *In the heart of the king's enemies.* That is, the *truths* stated by the Messiah, the conquering king, would penetrate deep into the soul, and slay the sinner, the enemy of the king, that is, of the Messiah. The idea is, that truth would produce an effect in regard to the hopes of the sinner—his self-confidence—his life *as* a sinner—like that which the arrow does when it penetrates the heart. Comp. Rom. vii. 9: "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." See also *ibid.*, vers. 10, 11. ¶ Whereby *the people fall under thee.* As the effect of the arrows; as the effect of truth. The representation is that of victory. As here represented, it is the victory of truth; a conquest by subjecting men to the authority and reign of God.

6. *Thy throne, O God,* is *for ever and ever.* This passage is quoted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in proof that the Messiah is exalted above the angels, and it is, beyond all question, adduced by him as having original reference to the Messiah. See the passage explained at length in the Notes on Heb. i. 8. I do not perceive, after an interval of nearly twenty years since those Notes were written, that it is necessary to alter or to add anything to what is there said in explanation of the passage. It is undoubtedly an address to the "king" here referred to as *God*—as one to whom the name *God*—אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*—may be properly applied; and, as applied to the Messiah by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it clearly proves that Christ is Divine.

7. *Thou lovest righteousness,* etc. See this verse explained in the Notes on Heb. i. 9, where it is applied to the Messiah. The word "God" is rendered in the margin "O God:"—"O God, thy God, hath anointed thee," etc. According to this construction, the thought would be carried on which is suggested in ver. 6, of a direct address to the Messiah as God. This construction is not necessary, but it is the most obvious one. The Messiah—the Lord Jesus—though he is described as God himself (John i. 1, *et al.*), yet addresses God as *his* God, John xx. 17. As Mediator, as appearing in human form, as commissioned to perform the work of redemption, and to subdue the world to the Divine authority, it was proper thus to address his Father as *his* God, and to acknowledge Him as the source of all authority and law.

8. *All thy garments* smell *of myrrh.* The word *smell* is not in the original. The literal translation would be, "Myrrh, and aloes,—cassia,—all thy garments;" that is, they were so impregnated with perfumes that these seemed to constitute his very clothing. The mention of the "anointing" in the previous verse may have suggested the idea of these perfumes, as the anointing with a richly perfumed unguent seemed to have spread over, and to have pervaded all his raiment. Comp. Ps. cxxxiii. 2. It was common, however, for Orientals to use much perfumery, particularly

myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

on festive occasions. Myrrh—מוֹר, *mor*, or *mur*—is an article which exudes from a tree found in Arabia, and still more extensively in Abyssinia. It is obtained by making an incision in the bark. It constituted one of the earliest articles of commerce (Gen. xliii. 11), and was highly esteemed by the Egyptians and Jews, as well as by the Greeks and the Romans. It is mentioned in Esther ii. 12 as an article used in the purification of women; and as a perfume, Cant. iv. 6; v. 5. It was used among the ancients, not only as a perfume, but as a fumigator, and as an article of medicine, and was employed in embalming the bodies of the dead. Herodotus, speaking of the practice of embalming among the Egyptians, says, "They then fill the body with powder of pure myrrh, cassia, and other perfumes, except frankincense," ii. 86. Comp. Ex. xxx. 23; Matt. ii. 11; Mark xv. 23; John xix. 39. Of the tree which produces the myrrh, however, we have as yet no very accurate accounts. See Kitto's Encyc., art. *Mor.* ¶ *And aloes.* The word rendered *aloes*—אֲהָלוֹת, *ahaloth*—occurs four times in the Old Testament: Numb. xxiv. 6, where it is rendered *lign-aloes;* and here, as in Prov. vii. 17; Cant. iv. 14, where it is rendered *aloes.* The reference is, undoubtedly, to some odoriferous substance, well known in ancient times. Why the word *aloes* has been used as a translation of the original word, in the English and in the older versions, it is not easy to ascertain, but it is certain that the substance referred to is not to be confounded with the bitter and nauseous aloes known as a medicine. It is now generally understood that the reference in the word as used in the Scriptures, is to a species of odoriferous tree growing in India, and which anciently doubtless constituted part of the valuable commerce of the East. It is not a *fruit* or a *gum*, but the tree itself. It is a species of sweet-smelling *wood*, and was valued on account of its fragrance. It is produced still in India. The tree is believed to be a native of the mountainous tracts east and south-east of Silhet, in about 24 degrees of north latitude. See Kitto's Encyc., art. *Ahalim.* ¶ And *cassia.* Cassia—קְצִיעוֹת, *ketzioth*—is better known. It is a bark resembling cinnamon, but less aromatic. It is mentioned in two other places in the Scriptures, Ex. xxx. 24; Ezek. xxvii. 19. This, as well as "aloes," is a production of India and its islands. See Kitto's Encyc., art. *Ketzioth.* ¶ *Out of the ivory palaces.* That is, As thou comest out of the ivory palaces. The representation is that of the king as coming out of the palace where he dwelt, and as clad in apparel appropriate to his station, and surrounded by his attendants, diffusing joy all around them. The imagery has *changed* from what it was in vers. 3–5, where he goes forth as a conqueror, with his sword on his "thigh," and ascending his war-chariot. Here he appears clothed, indeed, in regal splendour, in the magnificence of state, but as the husband of the bride, and as encircled with the attendants of an Oriental court. Ivory palaces are palaces adorned with ivory, or where ivory constituted a prominent and striking part of the ornaments. It cannot be supposed that the palace was constructed entirely of ivory. Kitto supposes that this refers to the interior decorations, or that the walls were *inlaid* with ivory, gold, etc., as constituting a part of the decorations of the building. *Ivory*, it would seem, was so abundant and conspicuous that the name might be given to the whole structure. Such a palace was that built by Ahab: 1 Kings xxii. 39. ¶ *Whereby they have made thee glad.* Hebrew, "from them (or thence) they have gladdened thee."

9 Kings' daughters [i] *were* among thy honourable women: upon thy right [k] hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

10 Hearken, O daughter, and

[i] S. Song vi. 8. [k] 1 Kings ii. 19.

That is, They, the attendants referred to more particularly in the following verses, have gladdened thee; have diffused around a general joy; have contributed to make thee happy. He was clad in robes that became his station, and was accompanied and surrounded by attendants who diffused around a general joy, and who made his own heart glad. The *idea* may be, that the Redeemer, the Messiah, is made happy by the affection and the companionship of the redeemed, his people.

9. *Kings' daughters* were *among thy honourable women.* Those who were in attendance on him and on the bride were from the most elevated ranks; among the most honourable of the earth. The word rendered "honourable women," means properly, precious, costly; and then, dear, beloved; and this might be rendered "kings' daughters are among thy beloved ones;" that is, in the number of thy maidens, or of those attending on thee. The allusion is to a marriage, and the description is drawn from the usual accompaniments of a marriage in the east. The design, as applicable to the Messiah and to his union with the Church, his bride, is to describe him as accompanied with every circumstance of distinction and honour, to throw around him all that constituted beauty and splendour in an Oriental marriage ceremony. Nothing of earth could be too rich or beautiful to illustrate the glory of the union of the Redeemer with his redeemed Church. ¶ *Upon thy right hand did stand the queen.* The right hand is the place of honour, and that idea is intended here: 1 Kings ii. 19; Mark xiv. 62; xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3; Acts vii. 55. The idea here is, that the Church, the bride of the Lamb of God, as seen in the vision, is exalted to the highest post of honour. That Church has the place in his affections which the newly-married bride has in the affections of her husband. ¶ *In gold of Ophir.* In garments decked or ornamented with the finest gold. On the phrase "the gold of Ophir," see Notes on Isa. xiii. 12.

10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider.* This is probably to be understood as the language of the psalmist, in vision, as uttering counsel and advice which would be appropriate to the new condition of the bride. Some have understood it as the language of the father of the bride, uttering appropriate counsel to his daughter on entering upon her new relationship; exhorting her to affection and obedience in that relationship; charging her to feel that she is his, that she is to go with him, that she is to identify herself with his interests, and to "forget,"—that is, not improperly to long for her own people and her father's house. All this would be good advice for a father to give to his daughter in such circumstances; but the most natural interpretation is to regard the language here as that of the psalmist, or as inspired wisdom, in regard to the proper feeling in entering on such a relation. If this be the meaning, the word "daughter" may be used as a term of affection or kindness, as the word *son* often is, to denote one who is a disciple or learner. The *thought* suggested here is, that counsel or advice in regard to the manner in which she should demean herself to secure the continual confidence of her husband, may be very properly given to a newly-married bride. The counsel here suggested, considered with reference only to that relation, would be eminently wise. ¶ *And incline thine ear.* Attend to what is now said. The address is *repeated*—"Hearken;" "consider;" "incline thine ear;" as if the matter were of great importance. On the phrase "incline thine ear," see

consider, and incline thine ear; forget [l] also thine own people,

[l] Deut. xxxiii. 9; Matt. x. 37.

and thy father's house;

11 So [m] shall the king greatly

[m] S. Song iv. 9, etc.

Notes on Ps. xxxi. 2; comp. Ps. lxxviii. 1. ¶ *Forget also thine own people.* This is said on the supposition that the bride was a foreign princess. As such, it is to be supposed that she had been trained under other customs, under other forms of religion, and with reference to other interests than those which would now pertain to her. The counsel is, that she must now forget all these, and identify herself with her husband, and with his interests. The word "forget" cannot denote absolute forgetfulness, or that she was to cast off all affection for those who had trained her up; but the meaning is, that she was not to pine after them; that she was not to be dissatisfied with her new home and her new relations; that she was not to carry the institutions of her native country with her; that she was not to make use of her new position to promote the ends of her native country if they were adverse to, or hostile to, the interests of her husband and his country. As applied to a bride now, the advice would mean that she is not to pine for her old home; that she is not to make complaining and unfavourable comparison between that and her new home; that she is not to divert her husband from his plans, and the proper pursuits of his life, by endeavouring to induce him to forsake his friends, and to abandon his position, in order that she may be restored to the society of her earlier friends; that she is not to introduce habits, customs, amusements, modes of living into her husband's arrangements, derived from her former habits and modes of life, which would interfere with what is the proper economy of his house, and which would be inconsistent with his principles, and with his means of living. When she marries, she should make up her mind, while she cherishes a proper regard for her old friends, and a proper memory of her past life, to identify her interests with his; to go where he goes; to live as he lives; and to die, if such be the will of God, where he dies, and to be buried by his side. As applied to the Church—the bride of the Lamb—the idea here is that which we find so often enforced in the New Testament, that they who become the followers of the Saviour must be willing to forsake all for him, and to identify themselves with him and his cause. See Notes on Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26. We are to forsake the world, and devote ourselves to him; we are to break away from all worldly attachments, and to consecrate all to him; we are to bid adieu to worldly companions as our chosen friends, and make the friends of Christ our friends: we are not to pine after the world, to seek to return to it, to pant for its pleasures; we are not to take advantage of our position in the church to promote the objects which we had pursued before we entered it; we are not to introduce the customs, the habits, the plans which we before pursued, *into* the church. We are in all things to become identified with him to whom we have become "espoused" (2 Cor. xi. 2); we are to live with him; to go with him; to die with him; to be his for ever. ¶ *And thy father's house.* The home of thy childhood; the house where thy father dwells. The strongest earthly ties are to be made subservient to a higher and stronger tie, if we would become true followers of the Saviour. See Luke ix. 59—62.

11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.* That is, in consequence of your love to him, and your entire devotion of yourself to him. The word *desire* here is equivalent to having pleasure in; as meaning that his affection would thus be fixed on her. In this way—by forgetting her own home, and devoting herself to

desire thy beauty; for [n] he *is* thy Lord; and worship [o] thou him.

12 And the daughter of Tyre [p] *shall be there* with a gift; *even*

[n] Isa. liv. 5. [o] Ps. xcv. 6.

the rich [q] among the people shall entreat thy [1] favour.

13 The king's daughter *is* all

[p] Isa. xxiii. 18; Acts xxi. 3—6.
[q] Isa. lx. 3. [1] *face.*

him—she would secure his affection. In the married life, mere *beauty* will not secure permanently the love of a husband. The heart, as given to him, and as faithful to him, will alone secure his love. In like manner, it is nothing but sincere affection—true love on the part of the professed friends of the Saviour—the forgetting and forsaking of all else—that will secure his love, or make the church to him an object of desire. ¶ *For he is thy Lord.* That is, as a husband he sustains this relation to thee; or, this appellation may be given to him. In what sense this is true in respect to a husband, see Notes on 1 Pet. iii. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 3. In respect to the Saviour, the dominion implied in the word "*Lord*" is absolute and entire. ¶ *And worship thou him.* That is, as applicable to a bride, Show him respect, honour, reverence. See Notes on Eph. v. 33. The word means properly to bow down; then, to show respect, as to a superior; and then, to show proper respect to God, to wit, by worshipping or adoring him. See Notes on Matt. ii. 11; see Matt. viii. 2; xiv. 33; xv. 25; xviii. 26; xxviii. 9; Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9; comp. Notes on Heb. i. 6.

12. *And the daughter of Tyre* shall be there *with a gift.* On the situation of Tyre, and its ancient splendour, see Notes on Matt. xi. 21; the introduction to Isaiah xxiii.; and the Notes on that chapter. In the time of the psalmist it was probably the most wealthy and luxurious commercial town then existing; and it is referred to here as meaning that persons of highest rank, and of the greatest riches, and those who were surrounded most by affluence and luxury, would come to honour the king. Even the daughter of the magnificent prince of Tyre would deem it an honour to be present with a gift becoming her exalted station, and properly representing the wealth of a king of so much magnificence. This is the imagery. As applied to the Messiah, it is a description of the honour which would be shown to *him* by those of highest rank and largest wealth. Comp. Notes on Isa. lx. 5—7, 9, 11, 13. ¶ Even *the rich among the people.* Rich men scattered among the people. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 29. ¶ *Shall entreat thy favour.* Marg., as in Heb., *thy face.* Shall desire thy smile; the light of thy countenance; thy friendship. The word rendered "entreat" — חָלָה, *hhalah*—means properly to be rubbed; then, to be polished; and then, in the form used here (Piel) to rub, or stroke the face of any one; to soothe or caress; to flatter, to court; and the idea is literally that of one who caresses or soothes, or seeks to conciliate. The sense here is, *the richest of the nations shall make court to thee with gifts.* Gesenius, *Lex.* Ultimately this will be true in regard to the Messiah. Comp. as above, Isa. lx. The wealth of the world will yet be laid at his feet, and placed at his disposal. The effect of true conversion is *always* to make men willing to consecrate to the Saviour *all* that they possess.

13. *The king's daughter.* This evidently refers to the bride, the daughter of the foreign king. The verse contains a description of her beauty—her splendour of attire—before she is brought to the king, her future husband. She is represented here as in the palace or home of her father, before she is conducted forth to be given to her future husband in marriage. Is *all glorious.* Is all splendour or beauty; is *altogether* splendour. There is nothing that is

glorious within; her clothing [r] *is* of wrought gold.

14 She shall be brought [s] unto the king in raiment of needle-

[r] Isa. lxi. 10; Rev. xix. 7, 8. [s] S. Song i. 4.

work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

15 With gladness [t] and re-

[t] Isa. xxxv. 10; Jude 24.

not splendid, rich, magnificent in her appearance, or in her apparel. As seen in ver. 9, she is clad in gold; she is surrounded by honourable women—the daughters of kings (ver. 9), and encompassed with the rich, ver. 12. As seen here, she is in her father's house, adorned for the marriage, and to be brought to the king, her future husband, attired in all that could give grace and beauty to her person. The allusion here, as referring to the church—the "bride of the Lamb"—*may be* to that church considered as redeemed, and about to be received to heaven, to dwell with its Husband and Saviour. Comp. Notes on Rev. xix. 7, 8; xxi. 2, 9. ¶ *Within.* This does not refer to herself, as if she was not merely splendid in her attire, but holy and pure—glorious and lovely—in *heart;* it refers to her as seen while yet "*within*" the palace or home of her father, in her own dwelling. The Hebrew word — פְּנִימָה, *penimah*—means properly, "at or by the inner wall of a house, room, or court; that is, opposite to or in front of the door, and of those entering." Gesenius, *Lex.* As seen in her dwelling—within the palace—in the most honoured place—she is arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and adorned as becomes a king's daughter about to be married. ¶ *Her clothing* is *of wrought gold.* Gold embroidery. See ver. 9. That is, she is arrayed in the richest apparel.

14. *She shall be brought unto the king.* She shall be conducted to the king in the marriage procession, and be presented to him, clad in this magnificent raiment. The entire imagery is that of an Oriental marriage procession, where the bride is conducted forth to her future husband, attended by her virgin companions, or (as we should say) *bridesmaids.* ¶ *In raiment of needlework.* The word here used means properly *something variegated* or *versicoloured,* and would here denote a garment of divers colours, or *versicoloured raiment.* The word—רִקְמָה, *rikmah*—occurs in the following places: Judges v. 30, twice, where (as here) it is rendered *needlework;*—1 Chron. xxix. 2; Ezek. xvii. 3, rendered *divers colours;*—and Ezek. xvi. 10, 13, 18; xxvi. 16; xxvii. 7, 16, 24, where it is rendered *broidered work.* It has reference probably to embroidery or needlework, though the particular idea is rather that of the variegated *appearance* of the garment than to the manner in which it is made. ¶ *The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.* Literally, "virgins after her, her companions, brought unto thee." That is, they will be brought to the king. They will come in the same state as the queen herself; they, her companions, will be of so illustrious rank and birth, and apparelled with so much richness, that even *they* will be regarded as worthy to be treated as queens, or in the manner of queens. The design of the whole is to show the rank, the dignity, the splendour of the bride; herself gorgeously apparelled, and attended with companions so exalted as to be worthy of being treated as queens themselves. If this is to be regarded as applicable to the church, "the Lamb's wife" (Rev. xxi. 9), it is designed to describe that church as beautiful and glorious, and as worthy of the affection of its Saviour. Comp. Eph. v. 27.

15. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought.* They shall come forth, attending the bride, with music and songs; the procession will be one of hilarity and joy. ¶ *They shall enter into the king's palace.*

joicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

16 Instead [u] of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes [v] in all the earth.

17 I will make thy name [w] to be remembered in all genera-

[u] Psa. xxii. 30.

[v] Rev. i. 6.

[w] Mal. i. 11.

That is, Moving from the palace of the royal father of the bride, or from her home, they will enter the palace of her husband, her future home. If this is designed to refer to the church, it is a beautiful description of what will occur when the church redeemed shall enter heaven, the home —the palace—the glorious abode—of the great king its Saviour, and of the joy that will attend its triumphant admission into those everlasting abodes. Comp. Notes on Rev. xxi.

16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.* Instead of thy fame—thy celebrity—thy distinction—being derived from thine illustrious predecessors, it will be derived hereafter rather from thy sons; from the fact that they will be made princes and rulers in the earth. In our translation, this would seem to be an address to the bridal-queen, as if to console her for leaving the home of her illustrious ancestors, by the assurance that she would have children of her own, who would be still more illustrious. The connexion, however, and the original, at least, in the Masoretic pointing, demands that this should be understood as an address to the king himself—the main subject in the poem, as in vers. 2–9. The idea is, that he would derive his dignity and honour ultimately, not so much from his ancestors as his descendants; that those who would be born unto him would be more illustrious, and would have a wider dominion, than any who had gone before him in the line in which he was descended. It is not easy or practicable to apply this to Solomon, or to any other Hebrew prince; it is not difficult to apply it to the Messiah, and to the fact that those who would be descended spiritually from him, and who would ultimately be regarded as deriving true rank and honour from him, would far surpass in dignity all those who, in the line of kings, had been his predecessors. ¶ *Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.* Not merely assigning to them provinces, to be governed as a part of the empire, but in all lands, or where thy dominion shall be acknowledged all over the world. The image here is derived, undoubtedly, from the custom prevailing among kings of assigning portions of an empire as provinces to their sons. The meaning, however, considered as referring to the Messiah, is, that his lustre and dignity on earth would not be derived from a distinguished earthly ancestry, or from an illustrious line of kings from whom he was descended, but from the fact that those who would derive their authority from him would yet possess the world, and that this their authority under him would extend to all lands. Comp. Notes on Dan. vii. 14, 27.

17. *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.* The psalmist here evidently speaks as an inspired man, and the idea is that his thus singing the praises of the "king"—the Messiah—would be among the means of causing His name to be celebrated in all future ages. This song would go down to future times, and would serve to keep up the true knowledge of the Messiah in the far distant ages of the world. No one can doubt that this has been thus far accomplished; no one has any reason to doubt that this psalm *will be* among the means of keeping up the true knowledge of the Messiah, and of securing the remembrance of him upon the earth in all future periods of the world's history. This psalm has been on millions of lips, in

tions; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

praise of the Messiah; it will be on hundreds of millions more in future times, as expressive of tender love for the Redeemer. ¶ *Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.* Thy praise will never cease to be celebrated. The time will never come on earth when that praise will die away; and in all the eternity beyond the termination of this world's history there never will arrive a period when thy name will not be honoured, and when thy praises shall cease to be sung. Comp. Notes on Rev. iv. 10; v. 9–13. Happy are they who join in that song on earth; happy they who will unite in it in the heavenly world!

PSALM XLVI.

This psalm has been called *Luther's Psalm.* It was that which he was accustomed to sing in trouble. When the times were dark; when the enemies of truth appeared to triumph; when disaster seemed to come over the cause in which he was engaged, and the friends of the Reformation were dispirited, disheartened, and sad, he was accustomed to say to his fellow-labourers, "Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm."

The author of the psalm is unknown. It is not ascribed to David, but to "the Sons of Korah," and there are no indications *in* the psalm that David was the author, or that it refers to his times. There is reason to believe that most of the psalms attributed to the "Sons of Korah" were composed subsequent to the time of David.

The *title* of the psalm is, "To the chief Musician, for the Sons of Korah, a song upon Alamoth." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. On the phrase "For the Sons of Korah," see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii. The word "*song*" in the title occurs also in that to Ps. xxx. (see Notes on that title), and also in the titles to Psalms xlv., xlviii., lxv., lxvi., lxvii., lxviii., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., cviii., and from Ps. cxx. to Ps. cxxxiv. inclusive. Nothing seems to be indicated by it in regard to the nature and character of the psalms where it is found. The word *Alamoth* occurs only here and in 1 Chron. xv. 20, where it is found in connexion with the mention of certain singers or musicians, evidently referring to some kind of musical instruments which those who are mentioned used; "so the singers" (ver. 19), "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, *to sound with cymbals of brass;* and Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, etc., *with psalteries on Alamoth.*" The *word* from which this is derived—עַלְמוֹת, *Almah*—means properly *a virgin*, or a youthful spouse (comp. Notes on Isa. vii. 14); and the phrase here, and in 1 Chron. xv. 20, would seem properly to denote *after the manner of virgins;* that is, with the female voice, answering to our treble or soprano, as opposed to the deep bass or baritone voice of men. Then the reference might be to some musical instruments that were fitted to accompany that voice, or whose tones resembled that voice, as distinguished from cymbals, trumpets, harps, etc. The form of the instrument is now unknown.

It is not possible now to ascertain the occasion on which the psalm was written. It was evidently in view of trouble, or of some impending calamity; apparently some national calamity, or some time when the nation was in danger, and when it was felt that their only refuge —their last hope—was in God. It would seem to be not improbable that the psalm was composed when wars were raging abroad in the earth; when the nations were convulsed; and when Jerusalem itself was besieged and threatened with ruin. The main thought of the psalm —the central idea in it—is, that, amidst these general and far-spreading agitations and convulsions among the nations of the earth, the people of God were safe. They had nothing to fear, even though those convulsions and agitations should be multiplied and increased; even though they should be carried so far that the very foundations of the earth should be shaken, and the mountains removed and carried into the midst of the sea. There was to them an Infinite Protector; there were unfailing sources of peace; they had nothing to dread. It was their duty, therefore, to be calm, still, confiding, for God would be exalted among the nations of the earth. It is *possible* that the psalm refers to the invasion of the land of Israel by Sennacherib, and to the miraculous destruction of his

PSALM XLVI.

To the chief Musician [1] for the sons of Korah. A Song *x* upon *y* Alamoth.

GOD *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

[1] Or, *of.* *x* Ps. xlviii., lxvi. *y* 1 Chron. xv. 20.

host, as recorded in 2 Kings xix. and Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii. All the circumstances in that invasion,—the tumultuous hosts summoned for the war (Isa. xxxvi. 2); the overthrow of numerous nations by their armies (Isa. xxxvi. 18-21); the siege of Jerusalem itself (Isa. xxxvi. 2); the confidence of Hezekiah and of his people in God when the city was besieged (Isa. xxxvii. 14-20); and the final overthrow of the Assyrian host by the angel of the Lord (Isa. xxxvii. 36), agree well with all the statements in the psalm, and seem well to *illustrate* the psalm, though it be impossible now to determine with precise accuracy to what particular historical occasion it has reference. The circumstances in that invasion, however, are so similar to those supposed in the psalm, that, perhaps, we shall not be likely to err in supposing that the psalm *had* reference to that occasion.

The psalm is divided into three parts or strophes, the close of each of which is indicated by the word *Selah*, in vers. 3, 7, 11.

I. The first strophe, vers. 1-3. In this there is the general statement that God is a refuge and strength, and that the people of God would have nothing to fear though the earth should be removed, and though the raging waters of the ocean should shake the very mountains.

II. The second, vers. 4-7. In this there is the statement that the people of God had an unfailing source of consolation, like an ever-flowing river, making glad the city of God; that God himself was in that city as its Protector; that though the nations raged, and the kingdoms were moved, he had only to utter his voice and even the earth would be dissolved; that they had nothing to fear while the God of hosts—the God of mightier armies than those which had invaded the land—was with them.

III. *The third strophe*, vers. 8-11. In this we have a reference to the mighty power of God as actually put forth in the desolations, which *he* had made in the earth. He had shown that power by making wars to cease; by breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder; and by causing the war-chariot to be burned in the fire. They had, therefore, nothing to fear while such a God was their Protector, and it was their duty calmly to confide in him, and leave the whole issue with him, for it was his purpose to exalt himself among the nations of the earth.

1. *God* is *our refuge and strength.* God is for us as a place to which we may flee for safety; a source of strength to us in danger. The first word, *refuge*, from a verb meaning *to flee*, and then *to flee to*—חָסָה, *khasah*—or to take shelter in—denotes a place to which one would flee in time of danger—as a lofty wall; a high tower; a fort; a fortress. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. The idea here is, that the people of God, in time of danger, may find him to be what such a place of refuge would be. Comp. Prov. xviii. 10. The word *strength* implies that God is the *source* of strength to those who are weak and defenceless; or that we may rely on his strength *as if* it were our own; or that we may feel as safe in his strength as though we had that strength ourselves. We may make it the basis of our confidence as really as though the strength resided in our own arm. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *A very present help.* The word *help* here means aid, assistance. The word *trouble* would cover all that can come upon us which would give us anxiety or sorrow. The word rendered *present*—נִמְצָא, *nimtza*—means rather, *is found*, or *has been found;* that is, he has *proved* himself to be a help in trouble. The word *present*, as if he were near to us, or close by us, does not accurately express the idea, which is rather, that he *has been found* to be such, or that he has always *proved* himself to be such a help, and that, therefore, we may now confide in him. The word *very*, or *exceedingly*, is added to qualify the whole proposition, as if this were *emphatically* true. It was true in the most eminent

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the [1] midst of the sea;

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

[1] *heart of the seas.*

sense that God had always been found to be such a helper, and, *therefore*, there was nothing to fear in the present distress. Ver. 2.

2. *Therefore will not we fear.* Our confidence in God shall be unshaken and abiding. Having Him for our refuge and strength (ver. 1), we can have nothing to fear. Comp. Ps. lvi. 3. ¶ *Though the earth be removed.* Literally, "in the changing of the earth;" that is, though the earth should be changed. This may either mean, Though the earth should change its place or its very structure in these convulsions; or, though it should perish altogether. Comp. Ps. cii. 26. The idea is, that they would not be afraid, though the convulsions then occurring in the world should be continued, and should be extended so far as to destroy the very earth itself. God would remain their friend and protector, and they would have nothing to fear. ¶ *And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.* Marg., as in Heb., *into the heart of the seas.* This may either be understood literally, as implying that they would *not* be afraid though the mountains, the most fixed and firm things of earth, should be uprooted and sunk in the ocean—implying that nothing earthly was stable; or, the mountains here may be referred to as emblems of that which seemed to be most settled and established on earth—the kingdoms of the world. The idea is, that in any convulsion — any change — any threatened danger—they would place confidence in God, who ruled over all, and who could not change. It will be seen at once that this entire description of trust and confidence in God is applicable to the time of Hezekiah, and to the feelings which he manifested when the land was invaded by the hosts of Sennacherib, and when wars and commotions were abroad among the kingdoms of the earth. See the introduction to the psalm. It was, also, eminently fitted to console the mind in the circumstances to which Luther so often applied the psalm—the agitations, convulsions, wars, dangers in Europe, in the time of the Reformation. It is fitted to *any* time of trouble, when commotions and revolutions are occurring in the earth, and when everything sacred, true, and valuable seems to be in danger.

3. Though *the waters thereof roar* and *be troubled.* The waters of the sea. The idea is, that they would not be afraid though everything should be in commotion, and be as unsettled as the restless waves of the ocean. The earth might be changed, the mountains removed, the agitated sea roar and dash against the shore, but their minds would be calm. The word rendered *be troubled* means to boil; to ferment; to foam; and here it refers to the ocean as agitated and lashed into foam. Nothing is more sublime and fearful than the ocean in a storm; nothing furnishes a better illustration of the peace produced by confidence in God amid the agitations which occur in the world, than the mind of a seaman that is calm when the ocean is heaved in wild commotion. ¶ Though *the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* The rolling ocean breaking against the sides of the mountains on its shore, and seeming to shake them to their foundation. The word rendered *swelling* means properly majesty, glory; then pride, haughtiness, insolence. Literally, "though the mountains tremble *through their pride.*" Comp. Ps. cxxiv. 5. On the word *Selah*, see Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

4 *There is* a river, [z] the streams whereof shall make glad the city [a] of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, [1] *and that* right early.

[z] Ezek. xlvii. 1—12. [a] Rev. xxi. 2, 3.

[1] *when the morning appeareth.*

4. There is *a river.* There is no allusion here to any particular stream or river, but the image is designed to represent a state of peace and calm security in contrast with the rough and troubled ocean. While the ocean rages, and foams, and dashes against the mountains as if it would overturn them, the state of Jerusalem, the city of God, was well represented by a calm and gently-flowing river;—a river of full banks, diffusing joy and fertility and beauty wherever it flowed. This image, to represent happiness, abundance, peace, joy, is one that is often employed in the Scriptures. Comp. Isa. xxxii. 2; xxxiii. 21; xli. 18; Ps. i. 3; Rev. xxii. 1; Ps. xxxvi. 8. The *idea* here is simply that Jerusalem would be calm and serene amidst all the external agitations in the world—calm as a gently-flowing stream. The streams—the canals—the water-courses of such a river flowing around each dwelling and along each garden, would diffuse happiness and beauty everywhere. ¶ *The streams whereof.* The allusion here is undoubtedly to the canals, water-courses, or rivulets that were led off from the main stream for the purpose of supplying fountains and watering gardens. Thus the city of Damascus is watered by streams or canals cut from the river Barrady, that flows down from the regions of Anti-Libanus. The greenness—the beauty—the fertility—of Damascus is owing wholly to the waters of the river thus conducted to every house and garden in the city. Comp. introduction to Isa. xvii. So here, the flowing river of Divine mercy and goodness is conveyed, as in smaller canals or streams, to each home and heart, producing peace, calmness, joy,—while the world around is full of commotion and trouble. ¶ *Shall make glad the city of God.* Jerusalem, considered as the place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed peculiarly to dwell: Ps. xlviii. 1. ¶ *The holy* place *of the tabernacles of the Most High.* Of the *tent* where the Most High is supposed to abide. The word is applicable to any habitation or dwelling-place; but in the Scriptures it is applied peculiarly to the sacred tent erected by Moses in the wilderness, and ultimately removed to Mount Zion by David, as the Divine abode on earth. It is sometimes, also, applied to the temple; and if this psalm was written, as I have supposed, in the time of Hezekiah, it would be applicable to that. Comp. Ps. lxxxiv. 2; cxxxii. 5. The tabernacle and the temple were alike divided into two parts—the holy and the most holy place—and hence the *plural* term is sometimes applied to them. Comp. Notes on Heb. ix. 2, 3.

5. *God* is *in the midst of her.* God is in the midst of the *city* referred to above—the "city of God." That is, (*a*) he dwelt there by the visible symbol of his presence, the Shekinah; (*b*) he was there *actually* as a help and a protector. It was his chosen abode, and as long as such a Being dwelt in the city, they had nothing to fear. ¶ *God shall help her.* That is, in her danger, he will interpose to save her. This is language such as would be used in reference to a place that was besieged, and would well apply to the state of things when Jerusalem was besieged by the armies of Assyria under Sennacherib. The language expresses the confidence of the people in the time of the impending danger. ¶ And that *right early.* Marg., *when the morning appeareth.* Literally, *in the faces of the morning,* as the word is commonly used; or, more literally, in the *turning* of

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
7 The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* [1] our refuge. Selah.
8 Come, behold the works of

[1] *an high place for us.*

the morning,—for the verb from which the word is derived means properly *to turn*, and then *to turn to or from any one.* The noun is applied to the face or countenance, because the person is *turned to* us when we see his countenance. The poetic idea here seems to refer to the day as having turned away *from* us at night, and then as turning about *towards* us in the morning, after having gone, as it were, to the greatest distance from us. *Possibly* there may be an allusion here to what occurred in the camp of the Assyrians, when the discovery that the angel of the Lord had smitten them was made early in the morning, or when men arose in the morning:—"The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose in the morning" [that is, when men arose in the morning], "behold, they were all dead corpses," Isa. xxxvii. 36.

6. *The heathen raged.* The nations were in commotion, or were agitated like the waves of the sea. This language would well describe the consternation of the nations when the Assyrians went forth to conquest, and when, having subdued so many other kingdoms, they made war on Jerusalem. Comp. Isa. xxxvi. 18–20. ¶ *The kingdoms were moved.* That is, those who were invaded, as well as those that made the invasion. There was a general convulsion or shaking among the nations of the earth. ¶ *He uttered his voice.* God spoke; he gave command; he expressed his will. Comp. Gen. i. 3; Hab. iii. 6. ¶ *The earth melted.* The very earth seemed to melt or dissolve before him. Every thing became still. The danger passed away at his command, and the raging world became calm. The Bible abounds in language of this kind, showing the absolute power of God, or his power to control all the raging elements on land and ocean by a word. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 9. See also Ps. cvii. 25, 29; Matt. viii. 26.

7. *The* LORD *of hosts.* The God commanding, ordering, marshalling the hosts of heaven,—the angels, and the starry worlds. See Notes on Isa. i. 9. Comp. Ps. xxiv. 10. The reference here is to God considered as having control over all *armies*, or all that can be regarded and described as a marshalled host, in earth and in heaven. Having such a Being, therefore, for a protector, they had nothing to fear. See ver. 11. ¶ Is *with us.* Is on our side; is our defender. The Hebrew phrase here used is employed in Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8, to describe the Messiah. See Notes on those passages. ¶ *The God of Jacob.* See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 6. The meaning is, The God whom Jacob acknowledged, and whom he found to be his friend, is with us. ¶ Is *our refuge.* Literally, a high place, as a tower, far above the reach of enemies. See Notes on Ps. ix. 9; xviii. 2. So the margin, *an high place for us.*

8. *Come, behold the works of the* LORD. Go forth and see what the Lord has done. See, in what his hand has accomplished, how secure we are if we put our trust in him. ¶ *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* Or, in the land. The word *desolations* might refer to any *ruin* or *overthrow*, which he had brought upon the land of Israel, or on the nations abroad—the destruction of cities, towns, or armies, as proof of his power, and of his ability to save those who put their trust in him. But if this be supposed to refer to the invasion of the land of Israel by Sennacherib, it may point to what occurred to his armies when the angel of the Lord went forth and smote them in their

the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder: he burneth [b] the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I *am* God; I will be exalted among

[b] Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.

camp (Isa. xxxvii. 36), and to the consequent deliverance of Jerusalem from danger. Without impropriety, perhaps, this may be regarded as an appeal to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go forth and see for themselves how complete was the deliverance; how utter the ruin of their foes; how abundant the proof that God was able to protect his people in times of danger. It adds great beauty to this psalm to suppose that it *was* composed on that occasion, or in view of that invasion, for every part of the psalm may receive a beautiful, and an ample illustration from what occurred at that memorable period. Nothing *could* furnish a clearer proof of the power of God to save, and of the propriety of putting confidence in him in times of national danger, than a survey of the camp of the Assyrians, where an hundred and eighty-five thousand men had been smitten down in one night by the angel of God. Comp. 2 Kings xix. 35; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21; Isa. xxxvii. 36.

9. *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.* Either in all the land, or in all the world. The overthrow of the Assyrian army would probably put an end to all the wars then raging in the world. The Assyrian empire was then the most mighty on the globe; it was engaged in wide schemes of conquest; it had already overrun many of the smaller kingdoms of the world (Isa. xxxvii. 18–20); and it hoped to complete its conquests, and to secure the ascendancy over the entire earth, by the subjugation of India and Egypt. When the vast army of that empire, engaged in such a purpose, was overthrown, the consequence would be that the nations would be at rest, or that there would be universal peace. Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 6, 7. ¶ *He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder.* That is, he makes them useless, as a bow that is broken is of no value, or a spear that is cut into parts. ¶ *He burneth the chariot in the fire.* The war-chariot, that which was employed in battle. See Notes on Isa. ii. 7; Ps. xx. 7. The expression here may refer to a custom of collecting the spoils of war into a heap, and setting them on fire. This was particularly done when the victors were unable to remove them, or so to secure them as to preclude all danger of their being taken again and used against themselves. This custom is alluded to by Virgil, *Æn.* viii. 561, 562,

"Qualis cram, cùm primam aciem Præneste sub ipsâ
Stravi, scutorumque iucendi victor acervos."

The idea here is, that God had wholly overthrown the foe, and had prevented all danger of his returning again for purposes of conquest.

10. *Be still.* The word here used —from רָפָה, *raphah*—means properly to cast down; to let fall; to let hang down; then, to be relaxed, slackened, especially the hands. It is also employed in the sense of *not* making an effort; *not* putting forth exertion; and then would express the idea of leaving matters with God, or of being without anxiety about the issue. Comp. Ex. xiv. 13, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." In this place the word seems to be used as meaning that there was to be no anxiety; that there was to be a calm, confiding, trustful state of mind in view of the displays of the Divine presence and power. The mind was to be calm, in view of the fact that God had interposed, and had shown that he was able to defend his people when surrounded by dangers. If this is understood as having reference to

the heathen, I will be exalted *e* in the earth.

e Isa. ii. 11, 17.

11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

the Divine interposition when Jerusalem was threatened by the armies of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, the force and beauty of the expression will be most clearly seen. ¶ *And know that I* am *God.* See, in what I have done, the evidence that I am God. See a work accomplished which none *but* God could effect. Comp. Isa. xxxvii. 36. ¶ *I will be exalted among the heathen.* That is, among the *nations.* The nations abroad that do not worship me, but worship idols, shall see in these deeds full proof that I am the true God, and that I am worthy of universal adoration. Comp. Notes on Daniel iii. 28, 29; iv. 1–3, 37. See also Ex. ix. 16; Rom. ix. 17. ¶ *I will be exalted in the earth.* In the lands abroad; all over the world. The defeat and destruction of the armies of Sennacherib were eminently fitted to make a deep impression on the world that the God of the Hebrew people was the true God.

11. *The* LORD *of hosts is with us,* etc. See ver. 7. This is the conclusion, or the result of the whole. As applied to the invasion of Sennacherib, this would be clearly seen, for all that occurred in that invasion was adapted to leave the impression that Jehovah, God of hosts, was with the Hebrew people. He had interposed in time of danger; he had saved his city and nation; he had overthrown one of the most mighty armies that had ever been assembled; he had caused the boasting conqueror himself to retrace his steps to his capital; he had wholly delivered the nation from all danger; and he had shown how easy it was, in ways which they could not have anticipated, to bring deliverance. The truth thus conveyed was adapted to the people of God in all lands and at all times, as showing that God has power to defend his people against the most formidable enemies, and that all their interests are safe in his hands.

PSALM XLVII.

This psalm is entitled, "To the chief Musician, a psalm for [marg., of] the sons of Korah." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. On the phrase "For the sons of Korah," see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed, and the name of the author, are alike unknown. It is a triumphal psalm, and was composed apparently on some occasion of *victory* over enemies, and with reference to a triumphal procession. Professor Alexander supposes that it was composed to commemorate the victory of Jehoshaphat over the Ammonites and Edomites, recorded in 2 Chron. xx. It is, as he remarks, a coincidence of some importance, that there is express mention made of the presence of the "Kohathites" on that occaion, as among those who "stood up to praise the Lord," 2 Chron. xx. 19. This is not, however, decisive, as they might have been present on other similar occasions, and as it is probable, in fact, that they usually took part in celebrations of this kind. All that can be expressed with any certainty in regard to the occasion on which the psalm was composed is, that it was on an occasion of victory.

The psalm consists of two parts, quite similar in structure and in design. Each part consists of an exhortation to praise God, followed by a statement of reasons why it should be done.

I. The first part comprises the first five verses:

(1) An exhortation to praise God—to celebrate the joy of the soul by a clapping of hands, and by a shout of triumph, ver. 1.

(2) Reasons for doing this, vers. 2–5. These reasons are that he is terrible; that he is king over all the earth; that he will subdue the nations, and make them subject to his own people; and that, in anticipation of this, and in proof of this, he had now achieved a signal victory, and had gone up as from that victory to his own abode in heaven.

PSALM XLVII.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah.

O CLAP your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

2 For the LORD most high *is* terrible; *he is* a great King over all the earth.

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

[1] Or, *of.*

II. The second part embraces the last four verses of the psalm:

(1) An exhortation, as before, to praise God, ver. 6.

(2) Reasons for this, vers. 7–9. These reasons are, as before, that God is king over all the earth; that he now sits upon the throne of his holiness, and that (ver. 9) the princes of the nations—the subdued kings and rulers—are borne along in triumph to the people of the God of Abraham; and that in this victory it has been shown that the shields of the earth belong to God. See Notes, ver. 9.

The psalm, therefore, is a triumphal ode, and was probably composed to be sung on occasion of some military triumph—some solemn procession on a return from battle, with captive princes marching in the procession, and with a display of the "shields" and other implements of war taken from the foe. All this is celebrated as indicative of the interposing power of God in victory, and as evidence of his purpose to protect his chosen people in time of peril. The psalm may yet be used in a higher sense by the church at large, when all the foes of God on earth shall be subdued, and when his kingdom shall be in fact set up over all the world.

1. *O clap your hands, all ye people.* A common way of expressing joy, or indicating applause. Comp. Notes on Isa. lv. 12. The *people* here referred to are probably the Jewish people, and the call on them is to rejoice, with the customary marks of joy, in view of the great victory which God had gained over their enemies. ¶ *Shout unto God.* Make a joyful noise in praise of God; that is, in acknowledgment that this victory has been gained by his interposition. ¶ *With a voice of triumph.* With such a shout as is usually raised when a victory is obtained; such a shout as occurs in a triumphal procession. Comp. 2 Sam. vi. 15; 1 Chron. xv. 28; Job xxxix. 25; Zech. iv. 7; Ex. xxxii. 18; Isa. xii. 6; xlii. 11; xliv. 23; Jer. l. 15. There are doubtless times when loud shouts, as expressive of joy, are proper.

2. *For the* LORD *most high.* Jehovah, the Most High God; that is, who is exalted above all other beings. Comp. Ex. xviii. 11; 1 Chron. xvi. 25 (Ps. xcvi. 4); 2 Chron. ii. 5; Ps. xcv. 3. ¶ Is *terrible.* Literally, is to be *feared;* that is, reverenced and adored. There is an idea in the words *terrible* and *terror* which is not contained in the original, as if there were something harsh, severe, stern, in his character. The word in the original does not go beyond the notion of inspiring reverence or awe, and is the common word by which the worship of God is designated in the Scriptures. The meaning is, that he is worthy of profound reverence or adoration. ¶ He is *a great king over all the earth.* He rules the world. He is a universal Sovereign. The immediate *occasion* of saying this, when the psalm was composed, was evidently some victory (which had been achieved over the enemies of the people of God) so decided, and so immediately by the Divine power, as to prove that he has absolute control over all nations.

3. *He shall subdue the people under us.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 39, 47. The word rendered "*subdue*" is that which commonly means *to speak.* The idea in the use of this word here is that he has only to *speak* and it is done (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 9), or that he could do it by a word. Comp., however, on the use of the word here, Gesenius (*Lex.*), on the word—דָּבַר, 2, Hiph. ¶ *And the nations under*

4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

5 God is gone up [f] with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

7 For [g] God *is* the King of all

[f] Ps. lxviii. 18, 33; Acts i. 11.

[g] Zech. xiv. 9.

our feet. That is, they shall be entirely or effectually subdued. See Notes on Ps. vii. 5; xliv. 5. As God would enable them to do this, it was an occasion for thankfulness and triumph.

4. *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* He has chosen or selected the land which we inherit. Of all the countries which compose the world, he has chosen *this* to be the inheritance of his own people, or the place where they should dwell. The thought in this verse is based on the idea so common in the writings of the Hebrews, that their country was the glory of all lands—the place of all on earth most desirable to dwell in. It is in view of this fact that they are here called on to praise God, and to rejoice in him. ¶ *The excellency of Jacob.* Literally, "*the pride*—גְּאוֹן, *gaon* — of Jacob." LXX., *beauty*—καλλονὴν. So the Vulgate, *speciem.* The meaning is, that it was a land of which Jacob, the ancestor of the people, might be proud, or which he did boast of. It was ever regarded as an honour among the Jews that they dwelt in a land which had been the abode of the prophets; and especially was anything regarded as of value that could be traced to Jacob; that had been once in his possession; or that could be regarded as his gift. Comp. John iv. 12. ¶ *Whom he loved.* As one of the patriarchs. Perhaps special allusion is here made to *Jacob* rather than to Abraham and Isaac, because the land came actually into the possession of the Hebrew people in the time of Jacob's sons. It was divided among the descendants of his sons, the twelve tribes, bearing their names; and thus Jacob was most naturally referred to as having been in possession of the land. Abraham and Isaac dwelt in the land as strangers and pilgrims (Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13), having no possession there, not even of a burying-place except as they purchased it (comp. Gen. xxiii. 12–16); and the land actually came into the possession of the nation only in the family of Jacob.

5. *God is gone up with a shout.* That is, he has ascended to heaven, his home and throne, after having secured the victory. He is represented as having come down to aid his people in the war by the overthrow of their enemies, and (having accomplished this) as returning to heaven, accompanied by his hosts, and amidst the shouts of triumph. All this is, of course, poetical, and is not to be regarded as literal in any sense. Comp. Notes on Ps. vii. 7. ¶ *The* LORD *with the sound of a trumpet.* Jehovah, accompanied with the notes of victory. All this is designed to denote triumph, and to show that the victory was to be traced solely to God.

6. *Sing praises to God, sing praises.* This commences the *second* part of the psalm. The *repetition* shows that the heart was full, or was overflowing with joy. It is a call on all to celebrate the praises of God, especially as he had enabled his people to triumph over their enemies. ¶ *Sing praises unto our King.* Unto God, who has shown himself to be the *King* of his people,—one who rules in their behalf, and who has interposed for their deliverance in danger.

7. *For God* is *the King of all the earth.* He has shown himself to be a universal sovereign. All nations are subject to him, and he has a claim to universal praise. ¶ *Sing ye praises with understanding.* Marg., Every one *that hath understanding.* Neither

the earth; sing ye praises [1] with [h] understanding.

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

[1] Or, every one *that hath understanding.*
[h] 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Col. iii. 16.

9 [2] The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields [i] of the earth *be-*

[2] Or, *The voluntary of the people are gathered* unto *the people of*, etc. 2 Cor. viii. 5.
[i] Ps. lxxvi. 3.

the text here, however, nor the margin, expresses the true idea of the original. The Hebrew is, "Sing a *Maschil*"—מַשְׂכִּיל; that is, Sing, or play, a didactic psalm or tune; that is, a song or ode adapted to convey valuable lessons of instruction. See the word explained in the Notes on the title to Ps. xxxii. The idea is, that the occasion was one on which *such* a psalm or song would be peculiarly appropriate; an occasion on which great *lessons* or *truths* had been taught by the dealings of God, which it became his people now to set forth in a becoming manner. Those lessons or truths pertained to the fact that God is the great King over all the earth, or that he is a sovereign among the nations:—a truth of immense importance to mankind, and a truth which the occasion on which the psalm was composed was peculiarly adapted to bring to view.

8. *God reigneth over the heathen.* Over the *nations;* not over the "heathen" in the sense in which that term is understood now. It does not mean that God reigns, or that he has set up his throne over the people that have not the true religion, but that he is exalted over the *nations* of the earth as such; or, that he has universal dominion. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 10. ¶ *God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.* Upon his holy throne. The idea is, that his government is established in holiness or justice.

9. *The princes of the people are gathered together.* The marginal reading is, *The voluntary of the people are gathered unto the people of the God of Abraham.* The word rendered *princes*—נְדִיב, *nadhib*—means properly, voluntary, ready, prompt; then, generous, liberal; then, those of noble birth, princes, nobles. It is evidently used here in this latter sense. The word *people* here may mean either the people of Israel, or the people of other lands; but in this place it seems evidently to denote the latter. The words "are gathered together" may refer either to a voluntary or an involuntary assembling; meaning either that they came in chains as prisoners of war, subdued by the arms of the people of God, and thus rendering an involuntary tribute to their power and their religion; or that they came in a voluntary manner, and submitted themselves, acknowledging the God of Israel to be the true God. It seems to me that the connexion requires that we should understand this in the former sense, as referring to the subjugation of the enemies of the people of God, and to their being led along as captives, assembled thus from distant parts of the world as proof that the God of Israel reigned. ¶ Even *the people of the God of Abraham.* The word *even* is not in the original. The meaning is, "*to* the people of the God of Abraham;" that is, they come and mingle with the people of the God of Abraham; or, they come as captives in war *to* that people, and confess in this manner that their God is the true God. The image is that of the assemblage of great numbers of foreign princes and nobles as furnishing either a voluntary or involuntary acknowledgment of the fact that the God of Abraham was the true God, and that the people of Israel were his people. ¶ *For the shields of the earth* belong *unto God.* Are of right his. This would seem to have been suggested by the marching in triumph of subdued and vanquished princes and

long unto God: he is greatly exalted.

warriors, their shields or weapons of war being borne along in the procession, demonstrating that Jehovah was King among the nations. It was seen in such a march that all those weapons of war *belonged* to him, or that he had a right to dispose of them, and to use them as he pleased. ¶ *He is greatly exalted.* That is, one who can thus subdue nations, and lead along captive princes and warriors, *must* be a Being greatly exalted; a Being that has dominion over the nations of the earth. This completes the imagery in the psalm, and gives occasion for the shouts and the joys of triumph. God had shown that he was a great King over the earth. Princes and armies were subdued to his will. They were led along as captives, and were gathered together to the people of God, as if to acknowledge their own inferiority; and in this solemn manner the nations thus subdued owned Jehovah to be the true God. In a higher sense this will be true when all the earth shall be subdued by the power of truth, and when kings, and princes, and people everywhere shall come and acknowledge God, reigning through the Messiah, to be the King of all nations. Comp. Isa. lx.

PSALM XLVIII.

The title of the psalm is, "A song *and* psalm for the sons of Korah." The *two* appellations, *song* and *psalm*, would seem to imply that it was intended to *combine* what was implied in both these words; that is, that it embraced what was usually understood by the word *psalm*, and that it was intended also specifically to be *sung*. Comp. Notes on the titles to Ps. iii., xviii., xxx. In Ps. xxx the two are combined as they are here. On the phrase "For the sons of Korah," see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii.

The *occasion* on which the psalm was composed cannot be ascertained. Prof. Alexander and some others suppose that it was composed on the same occasion, or with reference to the same event, as the previous psalm,—the overthrow of the enemies of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. Others, as De Wette, suppose that it was on occasion of the overthrow of the army of Sennacherib, 2 Kings xix. 35. The circumstances of the case best agree with the former of these suppositions, though it is not possible to ascertain this with absolute precision.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. An ascription of praise to God, especially as dwelling in a city which was, for its beauty and strength, an appropriate dwelling-place of such a God, vers. 1-3. The psalmist *begins* with a statement that God is worthy to be praised, (ver. 1); he then, in the same verse, refers to the abode of God, the city where he dwelt, as a holy mountain; he describes the beauty of that city (ver. 2); and he then adverts to the fact that God is "known in her palaces," or that he dwells in that city as its protector. Its beauty, and its security in having God as a dweller there, are the first things to which the attention is directed.

II. A reference to the danger of the city on the occasion referred to, and the fact and the manner of its deliverance, vers. 4-7. The psalmist represents the "kings" as assembling with a view to take it, but as being awe-struck with its appearance and as hastening away in consternation,—driven away as the ships of Tarshish are broken with an east wind.

III. The psalmist sees in these events a confirmation of what had been before affirmed of Jerusalem, that it would stand for ever, or that God would be its protector, vers. 8-10. There were on this subject ancient records, the truth of which the present event confirmed (ver. 8), and the psalmist says (ver. 9) that those records were now called to remembrance, and (ver. 10) that the effect would be that the name of God would be made known to the ends of the earth.

IV. A call on Jerusalem to rejoice, and a call on all persons to walk around and see the matchless beauty and strength of the city thus favoured by God, vers. 11-14. Its towers, its bulwarks, its palaces, were all such as to show its strength; the certainty of its permanence was such that one generation should proclaim it to another. God's interposition had been such as to furnish proof that he would be their God for

PSALM XLVIII.

A Song *and* Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah.

GREAT *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in [k] the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.

[1] Or, *of.*

2 Beautiful [l] for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the [m] north, the city [n] of the great King.

k Ps. lxv. 1. *l* Ps. l. 2; Lam. ii. 15.
m Isa. xiv. 13. *n* Matt. v. 35.

ever and ever, and that even unto death he would be the guide of those that trusted in Him.

1. *Great* is *the* LORD. That is, he is high and exalted; he is a Being of great power and glory. He is not weak and feeble, like the idols worshipped by other nations. He is able to defend his people; he has shown his great power in overthrowing the mighty forces that were gathered together against the city where he dwells. ¶ *And greatly to be praised.* Worthy to be praised. In his own nature, he is worthy of adoration; in interposing to save the city from its foes, he has shown that he is worthy of exalted praise. ¶ *In the city of our God.* Jerusalem. In the city which he has chosen for his abode, and where his worship is celebrated. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 4. This praise was peculiarly appropriate there, (*a*) because it was a place set apart *for* his worship; (*b*) because he had now interposed to save it from threatened ruin. ¶ In *the mountain of his holiness.* His holy mountain;—either Mount Zion, if the psalm was composed before the building of the temple,—or more probably here Mount Moriah, on which the temple was reared. The names Zion, and Mount Zion, however, were sometimes given to the entire city. Comp. Notes on Isa. ii. 2, 3.

2. *Beautiful for situation.* The word rendered *situation*—נוֹף, *noph*—means properly *elevation, height,* (Ges. *Lex.*); and the idea here is, that the mountain referred to is *beautiful for elevation;* that is, it rises gracefully. The allusion here is to Jerusalem as it would appear to one approaching it, and especially as it appeared to the "kings" (ver. 4) who came to invest it, and who were so impressed with its marvellous beauty and strength, that they were afraid to attack it, and turned away (ver. 5). ¶ *The joy of the whole earth.* Either the whole *land* of Palestine, or the whole world. Most probably the former is the meaning; and the idea is that, as a place of beauty and strength, and as a place where the worship of God was celebrated, and where the people of the land were accustomed to assemble, it was a source of national joy. ¶ Is *Mount Zion.* The term here used would seem to denote the whole city, Jerusalem, as it often does. Mount Zion was the most conspicuous object in the city, the residence of the king, and for a long time, until the temple was built, the place where the ark reposed, and where the worship of God was celebrated, and hence the term came to be used to denote the whole city. ¶ On *the sides of the north.* That is, probably, the houses, the palaces, on the north sides of the Mount Zion. These were eminently beautiful; they struck one in approaching the city from that quarter, as impressive and grand. The natural and usual approach to the city was from the north, or the north-west. On the west was the valley of Gihon, on the south the valley of Hinnom; and on the east the valley of Jehoshaphat and of the brook Kidron; and it was only as the city was approached from the north that there would be a complete view of it; or, that was the only quarter from which it could be assailed. The "kings," therefore (ver. 8), may be supposed to have approached it from that quarter; and thus approaching it, they would have a clear and impressive view of its beauty, and of the sources of its strength,—of the walls,

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

4 For, lo, the kings [o] were assembled, they passed by together.

5 They saw *it, and* so they

o Ps. lxviii. 12.

towers, and bulwarks which defended it, and of the magnificence of the buildings on Mount Zion. Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol.. ii., p. 476), says of the situation of Mount Zion, "What is there or was there about Zion to justify the high eulogium of David: 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King?' The situation is indeed eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel. Rising high above the deep valley of Gihon and Hinnom on the west and south, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the east, it could only be assailed from the north-west; and then 'on the sides of the north' it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers, and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations: 'For the kings were assembled; they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away.' At the thought of it the royal psalmist again bursts forth in triumph: 'Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following.' Alas! her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following." It was actually on the northern side of Mount Zion that most of the edifices of the city were erected. (Reland, Pales., p. 847.) ¶ *The city of the great King.* That is, of God; the place where he has taken up his abode. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlvi. 4.

3. *God is known in her palaces.* The word rendered *palaces* here means properly a fortress, castle, or palace, so called from its height, from a verb, אָרַם, *aram*, meaning to elevate, to lift up. It may be applied to any fortified place, and would be particularly applicable to a royal residence, as a castle or stronghold. The word *known* here means that it was well understood, or that the point had been fully tested and determined that God had chosen those abodes as his peculiar residence—as the place where he might be found. ¶ *For a refuge.* See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 1. That is, there was safety or security in the God who had chosen Jerusalem as his peculiar abode.

4. *For, lo, the kings were assembled.* There is evidently allusion here to some fact that had occurred; some gathering together of kings and their armies, with a view to besiege or attack Jerusalem. The kings referred to, if the allusion here is, as is supposed, to the time of Jehoshaphat, were the kings of Ammon and of Moab, and of Mount Seir, and perhaps others, not particularly mentioned, who came up against Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 1, 10. ¶ *They passed by together.* That is, they were smitten with consternation; they were so impressed with the beauty, the majesty, the strength of the city, that they passed along without venturing to attack it. Or, perhaps, the meaning may be, that they were discomfited and overthrown as suddenly *as if* the mere sight of the city had filled their minds with dread, and had made them desist from their intended assault. Comp. 2 Chron. xx. 22—25.

5. *They saw* it. That is, they looked on it; they contemplated it; they were struck with its beauty and strength, and fled. ¶ And *so they marvelled.* It surpassed their expectations of its strength, and they saw with wonder that any attempt to conquer it was hopeless. ¶ *They were*

marvelled; they were troubled *and* hasted away.

6 Fear *p* took hold upon them there, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

7 Thou breakest the ships *q* of Tarshish with an east wind.

p Ps. xiv. 5. *q* Ezek. xxvii. 25.

troubled. They were filled with anxiety and confusion. They even began to have apprehensions about their own safety. They saw that their preparations had been made in vain, and that all hopes of success must be abandoned. ¶ And *hasted away.* They fled in confusion. The idea in the whole verse is that of a *panic,* leading to a disorderly flight. This *may* have occurred in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx.), when the kings of Moab, Edom, and others, came up to attack Jerusalem, though the immediate cause of their overthrow was a conflict among themselves (2 Chron. xx. 22–25). It may have been, however, that they approached the city, and were dismayed by its strength, so that they turned away before the internal conflict occurred which ended in their ruin. But it is not *necessary* to adjust these accounts one to another, or even to suppose that this was the event referred to in the psalm, though the general ideas in it accord well with all which occurred on that occasion.

6. *Fear took hold upon them there.* Trembling seized them; they were filled with sudden consternation. That is, as soon as they saw the city, or had a distinct view of it, they became alarmed. ¶ And *pain.* Distress; anguish. The distress arising from disappointed hopes, and perhaps from the apprehension of their own safety. They were filled with dismay. ¶ *As of a woman in travail.* This comparison is often used in the Scriptures to denote the severest kind of pain. Comp. Jer. iv. 31; vi. 24; xiii. 21; xxii. 23; xxx. 6; xlix. 24; Mic. iv. 9, 10; Isa. liii. 11.

7. *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.* On the ships of Tarshish, see notes on Isa. ii. 16. The allusion to these ships here may have been to illustrate the power of God; the ease with which he destroys that which man has made. The ships so strong —the ships made to navigate distant seas, and to encounter waves and storms—are broken to pieces with infinite ease when God causes the wind to sweep over the ocean. With so much ease God overthrows the most mighty armies, and scatters them. His power in the one case is strikingly illustrated by the other. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that there was any actual occurrence of this kind particularly in the eye of the psalmist; but it is an interesting fact that such a disaster did befall the navy of Jehoshaphat himself, 1 Kings xxii. 48: "Jehoshaphat made *ships of Tarshish* to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not: *for the ships were broken* at Ezion-geber." Comp. 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37. This coincidence would seem to render it not improbable that the discomfiture of the enemies of Jehoshaphat *was* particularly referred to in this psalm, and that the overthrow of his enemies when Jerusalem was threatened called to remembrance an important event in his own history, when the power of God was illustrated in a manner not less unexpected and remarkable. If this was the allusion, may not the reference to the "breaking of the ships of Tarshish" have been *designed* to show to Jehoshaphat, and to the dwellers in Zion, that they should not be proud and self-confident, by reminding them of the ease with which God had scattered and broken their own mighty navy, and by showing them that what he had done to their enemies he could do to them also, notwithstanding the strength of their city, and that their *real* defence was not in walls and bulwarks reared by human hand, any more than it could be in the natural strength of their position only, but in God.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish [r] it for ever. Selah.

9 We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

10 According to thy name, [s] O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth; thy right hand is full of righteousness.

[r] Isa. ii. 2.

[s] Jos. vii. 9; Ps. cxiii. 3.

8. *As we have heard, so have we seen.* That is, What has been told us, or handed down by tradition, in regard to the strength and safety of the city—what our fathers have told us respecting its sacredness and its being under the protection of God—we have found to be true. It *has* been shown that God is its protector; that he dwells in the midst of it; that it is safe from the assaults of man; that it is permanent and abiding. All that had ever been said of the city in this respect had been found, in this trial when the kings assembled against it, to be true. ¶ *In the city of the* LORD *of hosts.* The city where the Lord of hosts has taken up his abode, or which he has chosen for his dwelling-place on earth. See Notes on Isa. i. 24; Ps. xxiv. 10. ¶ *In the city of our God.* Of Him who has shown himself to be our God; the God of our nation. ¶ *God will establish it for ever.* That is, this had been told them; this is what they had heard from their fathers; this they now saw to be verified in the Divine interposition in the time of danger. They had seen that these combined armies could not take the city; that God had mercifully interposed to scatter their forces; and they inferred that it could be taken by no human power, and that God intended that it should be permanent and abiding. What is here said of Jerusalem is true in a sense more strict and absolute of the Church—that nothing can prevail against it, but that it will endure to the end of the world. See Notes on Matt. xvi. 18.

9. *We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God.* We have reflected on, or meditated on. The word used here literally means *to compare, to liken;* and this idea is perhaps always implied when it is used in the sense of thinking on, or meditating on. Perhaps the meaning here is, that they had *compared* in their own minds what they had heard from their fathers with what they had now seen; they had called all these things up to their remembrance, and had compared the one with the other. ¶ *In the midst of thy temple.* See Notes on Ps. v. 7. The allusion here most probably is to the *temple,* properly so called, as these transactions are supposed to have occurred after the building of the temple by Solomon. The expression here also would make it probable that the psalm was composed after the defeat and overthrow of the armies referred to, in order that it might be used in the temple in celebrating the deliverance.

10. *According to thy name, O God, so* is *thy praise.* That is, as far as thy name is known, it will be praised; or, the effect of knowing it will be to inspire praise. A just view of thy character and doings will lead men to praise thee as far as thy name is known. This seems to have been said in view of what had occurred. Events so remarkable, and so fitted to show that God was a just, a powerful, and a merciful Being, would claim universal praise and adoration. ¶ *Unto the ends of the earth.* In every part of the world. The earth is frequently represented in the Scriptures as an extended plain, having ends, corners, or limits. See Notes on Isa. xi. 12; Rev. vii. 1. ¶ *Thy right hand is full of righteousness.* The right hand is the instrument by which we accomplish anything. The idea here is, that in what God had done it seemed as if his hand—the instrument by

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers

[1] *Set your heart to.*

thereof.

13 [1] Mark ye well her bulwarks, [2] consider her palaces; that ye may tell *it* to the generation following.

[2] Or, *raise up.*

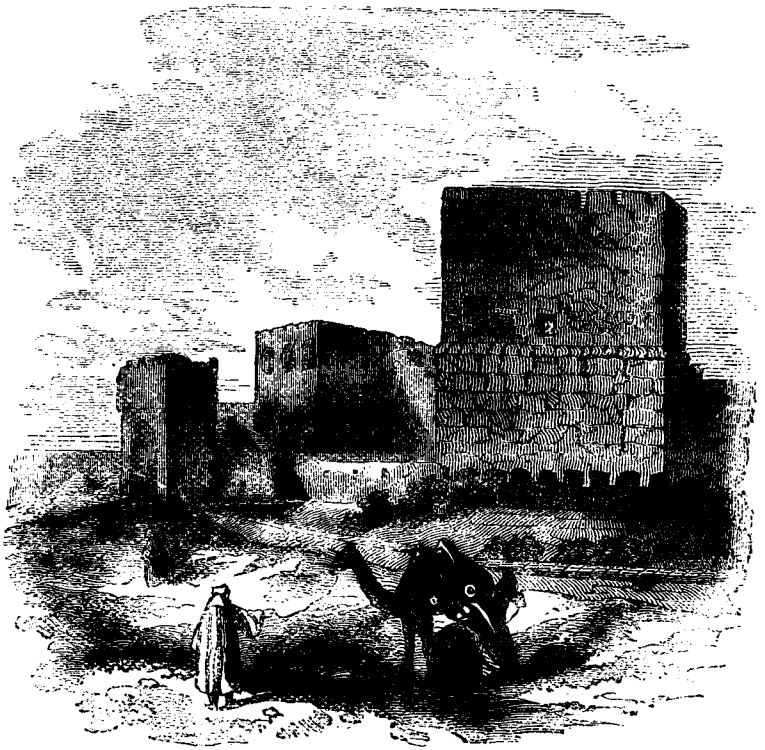
which this had been accomplished—had been *filled* with justice. All that had been manifested had been righteousness, and that had been in abundance.

11. *Let mount Zion rejoice.* Let Jerusalem, the holy city, rejoice or be glad. Mount Zion is evidently used here to designate the city; and the idea is, that the city of God—the holy city—had occasion for joy and gladness in view of the manifestation of the Divine favour. ¶ *Let the daughters of Judah be glad.* The phrase "daughters of Judah" *may* denote the smaller *cities* in the tribe of Judah, that surrounded Jerusalem as the "mother" city—in accordance with an usage quite common in the Hebrew Scriptures. See Notes on Isa. i. 8. Perhaps, however, the more obvious interpretation is the correct one, as meaning that the women of Judah had special occasion to rejoice on account of their deliverance from so great danger, and from the horrors which usually attended the siege or the conquest of the city—the atrocities which commonly befall the female sex when a city is captured in war. The "daughters of Judah" are those descended from Judah, or connected with the tribe of Judah. Jerusalem was in the bounds of that tribe, and the name Judah was given to all those that remained after the removal of the ten tribes. ¶ *Because of thy judgments.* Thy righteous interposition in delivering the city and people.

12. *Walk about Zion.* This is a call on all persons to go round the city; to take a survey of it; to see how beautiful and how strong it was—how it had escaped all danger, and was uninjured by the attempt to destroy it—how capable it was of resisting an attack. The word *walk* here means simply to go around or surround. The other word used has a more direct reference to a solemn procession. ¶ *And go round about her.* The word here used—from נָקַף, *nakaph*—to fasten together, to join together, means to move round in a circle, as if persons joined together (see Notes on Job i. 5), and would refer here properly to a solemn procession moving round the city, and taking a deliberate survey of its entire circuit. ¶ *Tell the towers thereof.* That is, Take the number of the towers. See how numerous they are; how firm they remain; what a defence and protection they constitute. Cities, surrounded by walls, had always *towers* or elevated portions as posts of observation, or as places from which missiles might be discharged with advantage on those who should attempt to scale the walls. Comp. Gen. xi. 4, 5; 2 Chron. xxvi. 9, 10; Isa. ii. 15.

13. *Mark ye well her bulwarks.* Marg. as in Heb., *Set your heart to her bulwarks.* That is, Pay close attention to them; make the investigation with care, not as one does whose heart is not in the thing, and who does it negligently. The word rendered *bulwarks*—חֵיל, *khail*—means, properly, a host or army, and then a fortification or entrenchment, especially the *ditch* or *trench*, with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it: 2 Sam. xx. 15; Isa. xxvi. 1. (Gesenius, *Lex.*) The LXX. translate it here δύναμις, power; the Vulgate, *virtus*, courage; Luther, *Mauern*—walls. ¶ *Consider her palaces.* The word *palaces* here refers to the royal residences; and, as these were usually fortified and guarded, the expression here is equivalent to this: "Consider the *strength* of the city; its power to

defend itself; its safety from the danger of being taken." The word rendered *consider* — פַּסְּגוּ, *passegu* —is rendered in the margin *raise up*. The word occurs nowhere else in the Bible. According to Gesenius (*Lex.*), it means to *divide up*; that is, to walk through and survey them; or, to consider them accurately, or in detail, one by one. The Vulgate renders it *distribute*; the LXX., *take a distinct*



TOWER OF DAVID.

view of (*Thompson*); Luther, *lift up*. The idea is, *examine attentively* or *carefully*. ¶ *That ye may tell* it *to the generation following*. That you may be able to give a correct account of it to the next age. The *object* of this is to inspire the next generation with a belief that God is the protector of the city; that it is so strong that it cannot be vanquished; that there is safety in such a city as that. As applied to the church now, or at any time, it means that we are to take such views of its being a true church of God; of its being fixed on firm foundations; of its being so able to resist all the assaults of Satan, and of its being so directly under the Divine protection, that it has nothing to fear. It will and must stand to all coming time, a place of absolute safety to all who seek protection and safety within it. The following remarks of Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. ii., 474, 475), with the above cut, may furnish an illustration of what the ancient defences in the city may have been, and especially of the word *towers* in this passage in the Psalms:—"The only castle of any particular importance is that at

14 For this God *is* our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide *t even* unto death.

t Ps. lxxiii. 24; Isa. lviii. 11.

the Jaffa Gate, commonly called the Tower of David. The lower part of it is built of huge stones, roughly cut, and with a deep *bevel* round the edges. They are undoubtedly ancient, but the interspersed patch-work proves that they are not in their original positions. I have been within it, and carefully explored all parts of it that are now accessible, but found nothing which could cast any light upon its history. It is believed by many to be the Hippicus of Josephus, and to this idea it owes its chief importance, for the historian makes that the point of departure in laying down the line of the ancient walls of Jerusalem. Volumes have been written in our day for and against the correctness of this identification, and the contest is still undecided; but, interesting as may be the result, we may safely leave it with those who are now conducting the controversy, and turn to matters more in unison with our particular inquiries. Everything that can be said about this grand old tower will be found in the voluminous works of Williams, Robinson, Schultz, Wilson, Fergusson, and other able writers on the topography of the Holy City."

14. *For this God* is *our God for ever and ever.* The God who has thus made his abode in the city, and who has manifested himself as its protector. It is our comfort to reflect that such a God is *our* God; that he has manifested himself as our friend; that we may habitually feel that he is our own. And he is not only our God now, but he will be such for ever and ever. A feeling that the true God is *our* God,—that he is ours and that we are his,—always carries with it the idea that this is to be *for ever*; that what is true now in this respect, will be true to all eternity. He is not a God for the present only, but for all time to come; not merely for this world, but for that unending duration which awaits us beyond the tomb. ¶ *He will be our guide* even *unto death.* The LXX. and the Vulgate render this "he will rule or govern (*ποιμανεῖ*—*reget*) for ever." The more correct rendering, however, is that in our version, which is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Some have translated it *upon* death, עַל־מוּת; others, *beyond* death; but the true idea is that he will be our guide, or will conduct us all along through life; that he will never forsake us until the close has come; that he will accompany us faithfully to the end. The thought does not, of course, *exclude* the idea that he will be our guide—our protector—our friend—*beyond* death; but it is simply that as long as we live on the earth, we may have the assurance that he will lead and guide us. This he will do in behalf of those who put their trust in him (*a*) by the counsels of His word; (*b*) by the influences of His Spirit; (*c*) by His providential interpositions; (*d*) by special help in special trials; (*e*) by shedding light upon our path when in perplexity and doubt; and (*f*) by support and direction when we tread that dark and to us unknown way which conducts to the grave. Man needs nothing more for this life than the confident assurance that he has the Eternal God for his guide, and that he will never be left or forsaken by Him in any possible situation in which he may be placed. If God, by His own hand, will conduct me through this world, and lead me safely through the dark valley—that valley which lies at the end of every traveller's path—I have nothing to fear beyond.

PSALM XLIX.

The *title* to this psalm is the same essentially as the title to Ps. xlii., xliv., xlv., xlvi., xlvii. On the meaning of the terms occurring in the title, see Notes on the title to Ps. xlii.

PSALM XLIX.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah.

HEAR this, all *ye* people; give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world.

[1] Or, *of*.

The *author* of the psalm is unknown. There is no evidence that it was composed by David; and, in fact, the presumption is that he was not the author, as his name is not prefixed to it.

It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the *occasion* on which it was composed. It would seem from the psalm itself (see Notes on ver. 5) that it was written in view of some evil or wrong which the author was suffering from rich oppressors, and that he sought consolation in his trials from the reflections which he makes in the psalm,—to wit, from the fact that wealth constitutes no security,—that it gives no permanence to the projects of its owners—and that it really possesses no *power* in carrying out the plans of those who abuse it to purposes of oppression and wrong. The wealthy man, no matter how great his possessions may be, cannot redeem a brother from the grave; he cannot save himself from the tomb; he cannot make his possessions permanent in his family; he cannot take his riches with him when he dies. There is really, therefore, nothing to *fear* from the man of wealth, for whatever such a man can do must be temporary. The higher interests of the soul cannot be affected permanently by anything so uncertain and transitory as riches. It is not improbable that this train of thought was suggested by an actual occurrence in the life of the psalmist, whoever he was; but the reflections are of universal importance in regard to riches considered as a means of power, and to their real value as it respects the great interests of man.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. An introduction, calling attention to the general subject as worthy of the consideration of all classes of persons, both low and high; as conveying lessons of wisdom; and as being the result of much reflection, vers. 1-4.

II. The main subject in the psalm, or the point to be illustrated; to wit, *that the righteous have no reason to be afraid when rich oppressors compass them around; or when the rich oppress and wrong them*, ver. 5.

III. Reasons for this; or, reasons why these who are possessed of wealth, and who glory in the self-importance derived from wealth, should not be feared, vers. 6-20.

(1) No one can by his riches save another—not even his own brother—from the grave, for all (whatever may be their condition) must die, and leave their wealth to others, vers. 6-10.

(2) They cannot, by any wisdom or skill make their possessions *permanent*, or *secure*, vers. 11, 12.

(3) They will not learn wisdom on this subject from the experience of the past, but the coming generation is as foolish as the one that went before, ver. 13.

(4) All must go down to the grave, however rich they may be, ver. 14.

(5) There is a better hope for the righteous, and though he goes down to the grave, he will live hereafter, ver. 15.

(6) The rich can carry none of their wealth with them when they go to the grave. All must be left behind, and pass into the hands of others, vers. 16-20. The conclusion from the whole, therefore, is, that we should not be "afraid" when one is made rich—when the glory of his house is increased; for the possession of wealth by another, though an enemy, gives him no such permanent power as to make him an object of dread. In our real, our highest interests, we must be safe, whatever the rich oppressor may do.

1. *Hear this, all* ye *people.* That is, What I am about to utter is worthy of universal attention; it pertains equally to all mankind. The psalmist therefore calls on all the *nations* to attend to what he is about to say. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 2. ¶ *Give ear.* Incline your ear; attend. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 6. See also Isa. xxxvii. 17; lv. 3; Dan. ix. 18; Prov. ii. 2. ¶ *All* ye *inhabitants of the world.* The truth to be declared does not pertain exclusively to any one nation, or any one class of men. All are interested in it. The term here rendered *world*—חֵלֶד, *hheled*—means properly *dura-*

2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding.

4 I will incline mine ear to a

tion of life, lifetime; then, *life, time, age;* and then it comes to denote the world, considered as made up of the living, or the passing generations.

2. *Both low and high.* Those alike of humble and those of exalted rank, for it pertains equally to all. On the meaning of the *terms* employed here, see Notes on Isa. ii. 9. These truths pertained to the "low;" that is, to those of humble rank, as teaching them not to envy the rich, and not to fear their power; and they pertained to those of exalted rank, as teaching them not to trust in their riches, and not to suppose that they could permanently possess and enjoy them. ¶ *Rich and poor together.* As equally interested in these truths; that is, What the psalmist was about to say was adapted to impart useful lessons to both classes. Both needed instruction on the subject; and the same class of truths was adapted to furnish that instruction. The class of truths referred to was derived from the powerlessness of wealth in regard to the things of most importance to man, and from the fact that all which a man can gain must soon be left:—teaching those of one class that they should not set their heart on wealth, and should not pride themselves on possessing it, and teaching the other class that they should not envy or fear the possessor of riches.

3. *My mouth shall speak of wisdom.* That is, I will utter sentiments that are wise, or that are of importance to all; sentiments that will enable all to take a just view of the subject on which I speak. This indicates *confidence* in what he was about to utter, as being eminently deserving of attention. ¶ *And the meditation of my heart* shall be *of understanding.* What I reflect on, and what I give utterance to, in the matter under consideration. The idea is, that he had meditated on the subject, as to what was real wisdom in the matter, and that he would now give utterance to the result of his meditations. It was not wisdom in general, or intelligence or understanding as such, on which he designed to express the results of his thoughts, but it was only in respect to the proper value to be attached to wealth, and as to the fact of its causing fear (ver. 5) in those who were not possessed of it, and who might be subjected to the oppressive acts of those who were rich.

4. *I will incline mine ear to a parable.* The phrase "I will incline mine ear" means that he would listen or attend to,—as we incline our ear towards those whom we are anxious to hear, or in the direction from which a sound seems to come. Comp. Ps. v. 1; xvii. 1; xxxix. 12; Isa. i. 2. On the word rendered *parable* here —מָשָׁל, *mashal*—see Notes on Isa. xiv. 4. Comp. Notes on Job xiii. 12; xxvii. 1. The word properly means similitude; then, a sentence, sententious saying, apophthegm; then, a proverb; then, a song or poem. There is usually found in the word some idea of *comparison,* and hence usually something that is to be illustrated *by* a comparison or a story. The reference here would seem to be to some dark or obscure subject which needed to be illustrated; which it was not easy to understand; which had given the writer, as well as others, perplexity and difficulty. He proposed now, with a view to understand and explain it, to place his ear, as it were, *close to the matter,* that he might clearly comprehend it. The matter was difficult, but he felt assured he could explain it,—as when one unfolds the meaning of an enigma. The *problem*—the "parable"—the

parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

5 Wherefore [u] should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass [v] me about?

[u] Rom. viii. 33, 34.

[v] Ps. cxviii. 11.

difficult point—related to the right use, or the proper value, of wealth, or the estimate in which it should be held by those who possessed it, and by those who did not. It was very evident to the author of the psalm that the views of men were not right on the subject; he therefore proposed to examine the matter carefully, and to state the exact truth. ¶ *I will open.* I will explain; I will communicate the result of my careful inquiries. ¶ *My dark saying.* The word here used—חִידָה, *Hhidāh*—is rendered *dark speeches* in Num. xii. 8; *riddle*, in Judges xiv. 12, 13, &c., to 19; Ezek. xvii. 2; *hard questions* in 1 Kings x. 1; 2 Chron. ix. 1; *dark* saying (as here) in Ps. lxxviii. 2; Prov. i. 6; *dark sentences*, in Dan. viii. 23; and *proverb* in Hab. ii. 6. It does not elsewhere occur. It means properly *something entangled, intricate;* then, a trick or stratagem; then an intricate speech, a riddle; then, a sententious saying, a maxim; then a parable, a poem, a song, a proverb. The idea here is, that the point was intricate or obscure; it was not well understood, and he purposed *to lay it open*, and to make it plain. ¶ *Upon the harp.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on Isa. v. 12. The idea here is, that he would accompany the explanation with music, or would so express it that it might be accompanied with music; that is, he would give it a poetic form—a form such that the sentiment might be used in public worship, and might be impressed upon the mind by all the force and power which music would impart. Sentiments of purity and truth, and sentiments of pollution and falsehood also, are always most deeply imbedded in the minds of men, and are made most enduring and effective, when they are connected with music. Thus the sentiments of patriotism are perpetuated and impressed in song; and thus sentiments of sensuality and pollution owe much of their permanence and power to the fact that they are expressed in corrupt verse, and that they are perpetuated in exquisite poetry, and are accompanied with song. Scenes of revelry, as well as acts of devotion, are kept up by song. Religion proposes to take advantage of this principle in our nature by connecting the sentiments of piety with the sweetness of verse, and by impressing and perpetuating those sentiments through associating them with all that is tender, pure, and inspiriting in music. Hence music, both vocal and that which is produced by instruments, has always been found to be an invaluable auxiliary in securing the proper impression of truth on the minds of men, as well as in giving utterance to the sentiments of piety in devotion.

5. *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil.* This verse is designed evidently to state the main subject of the psalm; the result of the reflections of the author on what had been to him a source of perplexity; on what had seemed to him to be a dark problem. He *had* evidently felt that there was occasion to dread the power of wicked rich men; but he now felt that he had no ground for that fear and alarm. He saw that their power was short-lived; that all the ability to injure, arising from their station and wealth, must soon cease; that his own highest interests could not be affected by anything which they could do. The "days of evil" here spoken of are the times which are referred to in the following phrase, "when the iniquity of my heels," etc. ¶ *When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about.* It would be difficult to make any sense out of this expression,

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, [w] nor give to God a ransom for him;

[w] Job xxxvi. 18.

though it is substantially the same rendering which is found in the Vulgate and the Septuagint. Luther renders it "when the iniquity of my oppressors encompasses me." The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it, "why should I fear in the days of evil, unless it be when the guilt of my sin compasses me about?" The Syriac renders it, "the iniquity *of my enemies*." The Arabic, "when my enemies surround me." De Wette renders it as Luther does. Rosenmüller, "when the iniquity of those who lay snares against me shall compass me around." Prof. Alexander, "when the iniquity of my oppressors (or supplanters) shall surround me." The word rendered *heels* here—עֲקֵב, *ákaib*—means properly *heel*, Gen. iii. 15; Job xviii. 9; Judges v. 22; then, the rear of an army, Josh. viii. 13; then, in the plural, *footsteps*, prints of the heel or foot, Ps. lxxvii. 19; and then, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*) *a lier in wait, insidiator*. Perhaps there is in the word the idea of craft; of lying in wait; of taking the advantage—from the verb עָקַב, *akab*, to be behind, to come from behind; and hence to supplant; to circumvent. So in Hos. xii. 3, "in the womb he held his brother by the heel" (comp. Gen. xxv. 26). Hence the word is used as meaning to supplant; to circumvent, Gen. xxvii. 36; Jer. ix. 4 (Heb., ver. 3.) This is, undoubtedly, the meaning here. The true idea is, when I am exposed to the crafts, the cunning, the tricks, of those who lie in wait for me; I am liable to be attacked suddenly, or to be taken unawares; but what have I to fear? The psalmist refers to the evil conduct of his enemies, as having given him alarm. They were rich and powerful. They endeavoured in some way to supplant him—perhaps, as we should say, to "trip him up"—to overcome him by art, by power, by trick, or by fraud. He *had been* afraid of these powerful foes; but on a calm review of the whole matter, he came to the conclusion that he had really no cause for fear. The reasons for this he proceeds to state in the following part of the psalm.

6. *They that trust in their wealth.* The first reason why there was no cause of alarm is drawn (vers. 6—10) from the *powerlessness* of wealth, as illustrated by the fact that it can do nothing to save life or to prevent death. He refers to those who possess it as *trusting* in their wealth, or *relying on* that as the source of their power. ¶ *And boast themselves;* pride themselves; or feel conscious of safety and strength because they are rich. It is the *power* which wealth is supposed to confer, that is alluded to here. ¶ *In the multitude of their riches.* The abundance of their wealth.

7. *None* of them *can by any means redeem his brother.* None of those who are rich. This verse might be literally rendered, "a brother cannot by redeeming redeem; a man cannot give to God his own ransom." The passage, therefore, may mean either, as in our version, that no one, however rich, can redeem a brother—his own brother—by his wealth; or, that a brother—one who sustains the relation of a brother—cannot rescue another from death. On the word *redeem*, see Notes on Ps. xxv. 22; Isa. xliii. 3. It means here that he could not rescue him, or save him from the grave; he could not by his wealth preserve him in life. The whole expression is emphatic: "redeeming he cannot redeem;" that is—according to Hebrew usage—he cannot *possibly* do it; it *cannot* be done. There is here no particular reference to the *means* to be employed,

8 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and [x] it ceaseth for ever);

[x] Zeph. i. 18.

but only an emphatic statement of the fact that *it cannot by any possibility be done.* The object is to show how powerless and valueless is wealth in regard to the things that most pertain to a man's welfare. It can do literally *nothing* in that which most deeply affects man, and in which he most needs help. There is no allusion here to the redemption of the soul, or to the great work of redemption, as that term is commonly understood; but it *is* true, in the highest sense, that if wealth cannot "redeem" life, or keep our best and nearest friend from the grave, much less can it avail in that which is so much more important, and so much more difficult, the redemption of the soul from eternal ruin. Here, also, as in the matter of saving from the grave, it is absolutely true that wealth can do *nothing*—literally, *nothing*—in saving the soul of its possessor, or in enabling its possessor to save his best friend. Nothing but the blood of the cross can avail then; and the wealth of the richest can do no more here than the poverty of the poorest. ¶ *Nor give to God a ransom for him.* This would be more literally rendered, "a man cannot give to God his ransom;" that is, he cannot, though in the possession of the most ample wealth, give to God that which would purchase his own release from the grave. On the word *ransom*, see as above, the Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. Comp. Matt. xvi. 26.

8. *For the redemption of their soul is precious.* The word *soul* here means *life*, and not the immortal part. The only question which the psalmist here considers is the value of wealth in preserving *life*, or in saving man from the grave. The phrase, "*their* soul," refers doubtless to the man and his brother, as alluded to in the previous verse. The idea is, that neither can the man of wealth ransom his own life from the grave, nor the life of his brother. Wealth can save neither of them. The word "precious" means *costly, valuable.* The word is applied (1 Kings x. 2, 10, 11) to gems, and then to the costlier kinds of stones employed in building, as marble and hewn-stones, 2 Chron. iii. 6. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 7. The idea here is, that the rescue of the life, or the saving from the grave, would be too *costly;* it would be beyond the power of all wealth to purchase it; no amount of silver or gold, or raiment, or precious stones, could constitute a sufficient *price* to secure it. ¶ *And it ceaseth for ever.* That is, Wealth for ever comes short of the power necessary to accomplish this. It has always been insufficient; it always *will* be. There is no hope that it *ever* will be sufficient; that by any increase in the amount,—or by any change in the conditions of the bargain,—property or riches can avail for this. The whole matter is perfectly *hopeless* as to the power of wealth in saving one human being from the grave. It must always *fail* in saving a man from death. The word rendered *ceaseth*—לָחַדַל, *khadal* —means *to leave off, to desist, to fail,* Gen. xi. 8; Ex. ix. 34; Isa. ii. 22. As there is no allusion here to the redemption of the *soul*—the immortal part—this passage affirms nothing in regard to the fact that the work of redemption by the Saviour is completed or finished, and that an atonement cannot be made again, which is true; nor to the fact that when salvation through that atonement is rejected, all hope of redemption is at an end, which is also true. But though there is, originally, no such reference here, the *language* is such as is *adapted* to express that idea. In a much higher and more important sense than any which pertains to the power of wealth in saving from the grave, it is true that the work of the atonement ceased for ever when the Redeemer expired on the cross, and

9 That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.

10 For [v] he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

11 Their inward thought *is*, *that* their houses *shall continue* for ever, *and* their dwelling-

[v] Ecc. ii. 16—21.

that all hope of salvation ceases for ever when the atonement is rejected, and when man refuses to be saved by his blood; nothing then can save the soul. No other sacrifice will be made, and when a man has finally rejected the Saviour, it may be said in the highest sense of the term, that the redemption of the soul is too costly to be effected by any other means, and that all hope of its salvation *has ceased* FOR EVER.

9. *That he should still live for ever.* That his brother whom he could not redeem—or that he himself—should not die, ver. 8. The idea is, that the price of life is so great that no wealth can rescue it so that a man shall not die. ¶ And *not see corruption.* Should not return to dust, or moulder away in the grave. See Notes on Ps. xvi. 10.

10. *For he seeth* that *wise men die.* He must see this; he does see it. He perceives that no one can be saved from death. It comes on all alike—the wise and the unwise. Nothing saves from it. The allusion is here especially to the *rich*, whether *they* are wise or whether they are fools and "brutish." The simple fact, as stated, is that no matter what may be the character of the man of wealth, whether wise or foolish, he must certainly die His wealth cannot save him from the grave. The possessor of wealth himself *sees* this. It cannot be concealed from him. ¶ *Likewise the fool.* The rich man who is a fool, or who is destitute of wisdom. He who is rich and who is wise—wise in the things of this life and wise unto salvation—(or who is gifted with a high degree of intelligence and who evinces wisdom in respect to the higher matters of existence)—and the rich man who is a fool—(who is regardless of his highest interests, and who evinces no special intelligence, though possessed of wealth),—all, all die alike. ¶ *And the brutish person.* The rich man who is stupid and dull; who lives like a brute; who lives to eat and drink; who lives for gross sensuality—*he* dies as well as he who is wise. Wealth cannot in either case save from death. Whether connected with wisdom or folly—whether carefully husbanded or lavishly spent—whether a man employs it in the highest and noblest manner in which it can be devoted, or in the indulgence of the most low and debasing enjoyments—it is alike powerless in saving men from the grave. ¶ *And leave their wealth to others.* It all passes into other hands. It *must* be so left. It cannot be carried away by its possessor when he goes into the eternal world. It not only cannot save him from the grave, but he cannot even take it with him. All his houses, his lands, his title-deeds, his silver, his gold, his parks, gardens, horses, hounds—all that he had accumulated with so much care, and worshipped with so idolatrous an affection, is not even his own in the sense that he can take it with him. The title passes absolutely into other hands, and even if he could come back to earth again, he could no longer claim it, for when he dies it ceases to be his for ever. How powerless, then, is wealth in reference to the great purposes of human existence!

11. *Their inward thought* is. Their secret expectation and feeling is that they have secured permanency for their wealth in their own families, though they themselves may pass away. The essential thought in this verse is, that the rich men referred to in the foregoing verses imagine that their possessions will be perpetuated in their own families. The word ren-

places to [1] all generations: they call *their* lands [2] after their own names.

[1] *generation and generation.*
[2] 2 Sam. xviii. 18.

12 Nevertheless, man *being* in honour abideth [a] not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

13 This their way *is* their

[a] Ps. xxxix. 5.

dered *inward thought*—קִרְבָּם, *kereb*—means properly *the midst, the middle, inner part;* and hence it comes to mean the heart, or the mind, as the seat of thought and affection: Ps. v. 9; lxiv. 6. It means here, their hope, their calculation, their secret expectation; and the whole verse is designed to show the value or importance which they attach to wealth as being, in their apprehension, fitted to build up their families for ever. ¶ That *their houses* shall continue *for ever.* Either the dwellings which they rear, or—more probably—their families. ¶ And *their dwelling-places to all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *to generation and generation.* That is, for ever. They expect that their possessions will always remain in the family, and be transmitted from one generation to another. ¶ *They call* their *lands after their own names.* They give their own names to the farms or grounds which they own, in the hope that, though they must themselves pass away, their *names* may be handed down to future times. This practice, which is not uncommon in the world, shows how intense is the desire of men not to be forgotten; and at the same time illustrates the main thought in the psalm—the importance attached to wealth by its possessor, as if it could carry his *name* down to future times, when he shall have passed away. In this respect, too, wealth is commonly as powerless as it is in saving its possessor from the grave. It is not very far into future times that mere wealth can carry the name of a man after he is dead. Lands and tenements pass into other hands, and the future owner soon ceases to have any concern about the *name* of the former occupier, and the world cares nothing about it. A man must have some other claim to be remembered than the mere fact of his having been rich, or he will be soon forgotten. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxii. 15—19.

12. *Nevertheless, man* being *in honour abideth not.* No matter to what rank he may rise, no matter how much wealth he may accumulate, no matter how fixed and secure he may seem to make his possessions, he cannot make them permanent and enduring. He must pass away and leave all this to others. The word rendered *abideth* — יָלִין, *yalin* — means properly to pass the night; to remain over night; to lodge, as one does for a night; and the idea is, that he is not to lodge or remain permanently in that condition; or, more strictly, he will not lodge there even for a night; that is, he will soon pass away. It is possible that the Saviour had his eye on this passage in the parable of the rich fool, and especially in the declaration, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. ¶ *He is like the beasts* that *perish.* He is like the beasts; they perish. This does not mean that in all respects he is like them, but only in this respect, that he must die as they do; that he cannot by his wealth make himself immortal. He must pass away just as if he were an animal of the inferior creation, and had no power of accumulating wealth, or of laying plans that stretch into the future. The squirrel and the beaver—animals that *lay up* something, or that, like men, have the power of *accumulating,* die just like other animals. So the rich *man.* His intelligence, his high hopes, his far-reaching schemes, make no difference between him and his fellow-men and the brute in regard to death. They all die alike.

13. *This their way* is *their folly.* This might be rendered, "This is

folly: yet their posterity [1] approve their sayings. Selah.

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion [b] over them in the

[1] *delight in their mouth.*

[b] Dan. vii. 22; Rev. ii. 26, 27.

their way or course of life. It is their folly;" or, such is their folly. On the word *way,* see Notes on Ps. i. 6. The idea is, that it is folly for a man to cherish these hopes; to feel that wealth is of so much importance; to imagine that it can deliver from the grave; to suppose that he can perpetuate his own name, and secure his possessions in his own family upon the earth. And yet the world is still full of men as foolish as were those in the time of the psalmist; men who will not be admonished by the suggestions of reason, or by the experience of six thousand years in the past. This is one thing in which the world makes no progress—in which it learns nothing from the experience of the past; and as the beaver under the influence of instinct builds his house and his home now in the same way that the first beaver did his, and as the brutes all act in the same manner from generation to generation, accumulating no knowledge, and making no advances from the experience of the past, so it is with men in their desire to grow rich. On other points the world accumulates knowledge, and profits from experience, garnering up the lessons taught by past experiment and observation, and thus becoming wiser in all other respects; but in regard to the desire of wealth, it makes no progress, gains no knowledge, derives no advantage, from the generations of fools that have lived and died in past ages. They now engage in the pursuit of gold with the same zeal, and the same expectation and hope which were evinced in the first ages of the world, and *as if* their own superior skill and wisdom could set at nought all the lessons taught by the past. ¶ *Yet their posterity.* The coming generation is as confident and as foolish as the one that went before. ¶ *Approve their sayings.* Margin, *delight in their mouth.* That is, they delight or take pleasure in what proceeds from their mouth; in what they say; in their views of things. They adopt *their* principles, and act on *their* maxims; and, attaching the same importance to wealth which *they* did, seek as *they* sought to perpetuate their names upon the earth.

14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* The allusion here is to a flock as *driven* forward by the shepherd; and the meaning is that they are driven forward to the grave, as it were, in flocks, or as a flock of sheep is driven by a shepherd. The word rendered "are laid"—שָׁתוּ, *shattu*—is not probably derived from the verb שׁוּת, *shuth,* or שִׁית, *shith,* as our translators seem to have supposed, but from שָׁתַת, *shathath,* to set, or place; and the meaning is, "Like sheep they put them in Sheol, or the grave;" that is, they thrust or drive them down thither. In other words, this is *done,* without intimating by whom it is done. They are urged forward; they are driven towards the tomb as a flock of sheep is driven forward to the slaughter. Some influence or power is pressing them in masses down to the grave. The word rendered *grave* is *Sheol.* It is sometimes used in the sense of the grave, and sometimes as referring to the abode of departed spirits. See Notes on Job x. 21, 22; Ps. vi. 5. It seems here to be used in the former sense. ¶ *Death shall feed on them.* The word rendered *feed* here—רָעָה, *raah*—means properly to feed a flock; to pasture; then, to perform the office of a shepherd. The idea here is not, as in our translation, "death shall feed *on* them;" but, death shall rule over them as the shepherd rules his flock. The

morning: and their [1] beauty shall consume [2] in the grave from their dwelling.

[1] Or, *strength.*

[2] Or, *the grave* being *an habitation to every one of them.*

allusion to the *flock* suggested this. They are driven down to the grave, or to Sheol. The shepherd, the ruler, he who does this, is *death;* and the idea is not that death is a hungry monster, devouring them *in* the grave, but that the shepherd over *that* flock, instead of being a kind and gentle friend and protector (as the word "shepherd" naturally suggests), is *death*—a fearful and grim Ruler of the departed. The idea, therefore, is not that of *feeding,* specifically, but it is that of ruling, controlling, guiding. So the Septuagint, *θάνατος ποιμανεῖ αὐτούς.* The Vulgate, however, renders it, *mors depascet eos;* and Luther, *der Tod naget sie;* death gnaws or feeds on them. ¶ *And the upright.* The just; the righteous. The meaning of this part of the verse undoubtedly is, that the just or pious would have some kind of ascendancy or superiority over them at the period here referred to as the "morning." ¶ *Shall have dominion over them.* Or rather, as De Wette renders it, shall *triumph* over them. That is, will be exalted over them; or shall have a more favoured lot. Though depressed now, and though crushed by the rich, yet they will soon have a more exalted rank, and a higher honour than those who, though once rich, are laid in the grave under the dominion of death. ¶ *In the morning.* That is, very soon; tomorrow; when the morning dawns after the darkness of the present. See Notes on Ps. xxx. 5. There is a time coming—a brighter time—when the relative condition of the two classes shall be changed, and when the upright—the pious—though poor and oppressed now, shall be exalted to higher honours than *they* will be. There is no certain evidence that this refers to the "morning" of the resurrection; but it is language which well expresses the idea when connected with that doctrine, and which can be best explained on the supposition that that doctrine was referred to, and that the hope of such a resurrection was cherished by the writer. Indeed, when we remember that the psalmist expressly refers to the "*grave*" in regard to the rich, it is difficult to explain the language on any other supposition than that he refers here to the resurrection—certainly not as well as on this supposition—and especially when it is remembered that death makes no distinction in cutting down men, whether they are righteous or wicked. Both are laid in the grave alike, and *any* prospect of distinction or triumph in the case must be derived from scenes beyond the grave. This verse, therefore, may belong to that class of passages in the Old Testament which are founded on the belief of the resurrection of the dead without always expressly affirming it, and which are best explained on the supposition that the writers of the Old Testament were acquainted with that doctrine, and drew their hopes as well as their illustrations from it. Comp. Dan. xii. 2; Isa. xxvi. 19; Ps. xvi. 9, 10. ¶ *And their beauty.* Marg., *strength.* The Hebrew word means *form, shape, image;* and the idea here is, that their form or figure will be changed, or disappear, to wit, by consuming away. The idea of *beauty,* or *strength,* is not necessarily in the passage, but the meaning is, that the form or figure which was so familiar among men will be dissolved, and disappear in the grave. ¶ *Shall consume in the grave.* Heb., *in Sheol.* The word probably means here *the grave.* The original word rendered *consume,* means literally to make old; to wear out; to waste away. The entire form of the *man* will disappear. ¶ *From their dwelling.* Marg., *the grave being a habitation to every one of them.* LXX., "and their help shall grow old in the grave from their glory." So the Latin Vulgate. The whole expression

15 But God will redeem my soul from the [1]power of [2]the grave; for he shall receive

[1] *hand.* [2] Or, *hell.*

me. Selah.

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

is obscure. The most probable meaning is, "they shall consume in the grave, *from its being a dwelling to him;*" that is, to each of them. Sheol, or the grave, becomes a dwelling to the rich man, and *in* that gloomy abode—that which is now his dwelling—he consumes away. It appertains to that dwelling, or it is one of the conditions of residing there, that all consume away and disappear. Others render it, "so that there is no dwelling or habitation for them." Others, and this is the more common interpretation, "their form passes away, the underworld is their habitation." See De Wette *in loc.* This last rendering requires a slight change in the punctuation of the original. DeWette, Note, p. 339. The *general* idea in the passage is plain, that the possessors of wealth are soon to find their home in the grave, and that their forms, with all on which they valued themselves, are soon to disappear.

15. *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.* Literally, *from the hand of Sheol;* that is, from the dominion of death. The hand is an emblem of power, and it here means that death or Sheol holds the dominion over all those who are in the grave. The control is absolute and unlimited. The grave or Sheol is here personified as if reigning there, or setting up an empire there. Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 9. On the word *redeem*, see the references in the Notes on ver. 7. ¶ *For he shall receive me.* Literally, *he shall take me.* That is, either, He will take me *from* the grave; or, He will take me *to* himself. The general idea is, that God would take hold of him, and save him from the dominion of the grave; from that power which death exercises over the dead. This would either mean that he would be preserved from going down to the grave and returning to corruption there; or, that he would hereafter be rescued from the power of the grave in a sense which would not apply in respect to the rich man. The former evidently cannot be the idea, since the psalmist could not hope to escape death; yet there might be a hope that the dominion of death would not be permanent and enduring, or that there would be a future life, a resurrection from the grave. It seems to me, therefore, that this passage, like the expression in ver. 14, "in the morning," and the passages referred to in the Notes on that verse, is founded on the belief that death is not the end of a good man, but that he will rise again, and live in a higher and better state. It was this consideration which gave such comfort to the psalmist in contemplating the whole subject; and the idea, thus illustrated, is substantially the same as that stated by the Saviour in Matt. x. 28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

16. *Be not thou afraid when one is made rich.* Do not dread the power derived from wealth; do not fear anything which a man can do merely because he is rich. The original is, "when *a man* becomes rich." The allusion is not necessarily to a bad man, though that is implied in the whole passage, since there is no reason for fearing a *good* man, whether he is rich or poor. The only thing that seems to have been apprehended in the mind of the psalmist was that power of doing injury to others, or of employing means to injure others, which wealth confers on a bad man. The psalmist here changes the form of the expression, no longer referring to himself, and to his own feelings, as in the former part of the psalm, but making an application of the whole

17 For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing [c] away; his glory shall not descend after him.

18 Though, [1] while he lived, he blessed his soul: (and *men* will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself:)

[c] Luke xii. 20. [1] *in his life.*

course of thought to others, showing them, as the result of his own reflection and observation, that no man had any real cause for dread and alarm when riches increased in the hands of the wicked. The reasons why this power should not be feared are stated in the following verses. ¶ *When the glory of his house is increased.* Rich men often lavish much of their wealth on their dwellings;—on the dwelling itself; on the furniture; on the grounds and appendages of their habitation. This is evidently referred to here as "the *glory* of their house;" as that which would be adapted to make an impression of the power and rank of its possessor.

17. *For when he dieth.* He must die. His wealth cannot save him from the grave. It is always to be *assumed* of rich men, as of all other men, that they *will* have to die. The point is not one which is to be argued; not one about which there can be any doubt. Of all men, whatever else may be said of them, it may always be affirmed that they must *die*, and important inferences may be always drawn from that fact. ¶ *He shall carry nothing away.* It is not improbable that the apostle Paul had this passage in his eye in what he says in 1 Tim. vi. 7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." See Notes on that passage. Comp. Job xxvii. 16–19. ¶ *His glory shall not descend after him.* His wealth, and those things which have been procured by wealth, as indicating station and rank, cannot accompany him to the other world. This is said to show that he is not to be "feared" on account of his wealth. The argument is, that whatever there is in wealth that *seems* to give power, and to afford the means of doing injury, must soon be separated from him. In respect to wealth, and to all the power derived from wealth, he will be like the most poor and penniless of mortals. All that he possesses will pass into other hands, and whether for good or for evil, it will no longer be in his power to use it. As this *must* occur soon,—as it *may* occur in a moment,—there is no reason to "fear" such a man, or to suppose that he can do permanent injury by any power derived from wealth. Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 6, 7, 10, 11.

18. *Though while he lived.* Marg., as in Heb., *in his life.* More literally, *in his lives.* The idea is, as long as he lived. ¶ *He blessed his soul.* That is, he blessed himself; he congratulated himself; he regarded his condition as desirable and enviable. He "took airs" upon himself; he felt that his was a happy lot; he expected and demanded respect and honour from others on account of his wealth. He commended himself as having evinced sagacity in the means by which he acquired wealth—thus imparting honour to himself; and he congratulated himself on the result, as placing him in a condition above want, and in a condition that entitled him to honour. A striking illustration of this feeling is found in the parable of the rich fool, Luke xii. 19, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." ¶ *And men will praise thee.* Others will praise thee. He not only blessed or commended himself, but he might expect that others would praise and congratulate him also. They would regard him as a happy man;—happy, because he had been thus successful; happy, because he had accumulated that which was the object of so universal desire among men. Success,

19 [1] He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

[1] The soul *shall go.*

20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts [d] *that* perish.

[d] Eccles. iii. 18, 19.

though founded on that which is entitled to no praise, and which is even the result of unprincipled conduct, often secures the temporary praise of men, while a want of success, though connected with the strictest, sternest virtue, is often followed by neglect, or is even regarded as proof that he who fails has no claim to honour. ¶ *When thou doest well to thyself.* Well, in reference to success in life, or in the sense that thou art prospered. Your industry, your sagacity, your prosperity will be the theme of commendation. To a certain extent, where this does not lead to self-flattery and pride, it is proper and right. The virtues which ordinarily contribute to prosperity *are* worthy of commendation, and should be held up to the example of the young. But what is evil and wrong in the matter here referred to is that the man's commendation of himself, and the commendation by others, all tends to foster a spirit of pride and self-confidence; to make the soul easy and satisfied with the condition; to produce the feeling that all is gained which needs to be gained; to make the possessor of wealth arrogant and haughty; and to lead him to neglect the higher interests of the soul.

19. *He shall go to the generation of his fathers.* To be gathered to one's own people, or to his fathers, is a common expression in the Old Testament in speaking of death. See Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 29, 33; Numb. xx. 24, 26; xxvii. 13; xxxi. 2; Deut. xxxii. 50; Judges ii. 10. It means that they were united again with those who had gone before them, in the regions of the dead. Death had indeed separated them, but by death they were again united. ¶ *They shall never see light.* He and the "generation" to which he has gone to be united, would no more see the light of this world; no more walk among the living: Job xxxiii. 30. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 11; Ps. xxvii. 13. The meaning is, that the rich sinner will die as others have done before him, leaving all his earthly possessions, and will no more be permitted to revisit the world where his forsaken possessions are, and will not even be permitted to *look* on what before had been to him such a source of self-confidence, self-gratulation, and pride.

20. *Man* that is *in honour.* Man that is in possession of wealth, or that occupies an exalted rank. See Notes on ver. 12. ¶ *And understandeth not.* That is, who has no proper appreciation of what it is to be a man; of what is his true rank *as* a man; of his relations to God; of his condition as an immortal being,—man that values himself only on the fact that he is rich; that lives for this world alone; that regards it as a sufficient distinction that he *is* rich; that degrades his nobler nature in the mere enjoyment of the pleasures of sense,—is like the beasts,—is in no way elevated above them. ¶ *Is like the beasts* that *perish.* They live only for this life. They have no higher nature than that which pertains to the senses, and they live accordingly. The man who, though of exalted rank, lives for this life alone, herein resembles them. See Notes on ver. 12. Alas! what multitudes there are who thus live,—whose only aim is to secure the wealth and the honours of this life,—who have no more thought of a future state, and who form no more plans in regard to a future world, than do the brutes! For many there are in exalted stations, who are surrounded by all that wealth can give, yet who no more admit the thought of a future world into their hopes and plans than if

they had no other endowment than the camel or the ox, and whose conduct in this respect would not be changed if all the higher endowments which constitute the nature of *man* were withdrawn, and they were at once reduced to the condition of a brute. While, therefore, the main purpose of this psalm is to show that wealth confers no *power* which is to be dreaded,—that its possessor, though wicked, cannot permanently injure us, since he must soon pass away by death,—the course of thought at the same time teaches us that we should not *desire* wealth as our portion; that we should not live for this, as the main object of life. The possessor of the most ample fortune must soon be laid in the grave. All that he has acquired will pass into other hands, and will be his no more. But he *has* a higher nature. He *may* live in a manner different from the brute that perishes. He *may* act with reference to a higher—an eternal—state of existence; and, when he dies, he *may* leave his earthly inheritance, whether great or small, only to enter on an inheritance that shall be permanent and eternal. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark viii. 36.

PSALM L.

This psalm purports to be a "psalm of Asaph." This is the first of the psalms ascribed to him. Twelve in all are attributed to him, viz., Ps. l., and lxxiii.-lxxxiii. Asaph was a Levite, a son of Berachiah, 1 Chron. vi. 39; xv. 17. He was eminent as a musician, Neh. xii. 46; 1 Chron. xvi. 7, and was appointed by "the chief of the Levites," at the command of David, with two others, Heman and Ethan, to preside over a part of the sacred choral services of public worship, 1 Chron. xv. 16-19. They had charge particularly of the worship as conducted with "cymbals of brass," 1 Chron. xv. 19. The "sons of Asaph" are afterwards mentioned among the choristers of the temple (1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2; 2 Chron. xx. 14; xxix. 13; Ezra ii. 41; iii. 10; Neh. vii. 44; xi. 22); and this office appears to have been hereditary in his family, 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2. Asaph was celebrated in after times as a prophet and a poet, 2 Chron xxix. 30; Neh. xii. 46. The title, rendered in the margin, "*for* Asaph," *may* mean either that the psalm was composed *by* Asaph himself, or that it was composed especially *for* him, by David or by some one else, and that it was committed to him to be set to music, or to be sung by that band of musicians over which he was appointed to preside. Comp. Notes on the title to Ps. xlii. The presumption is, that it was composed *by* Asaph, as this is the most natural explanation of the title, and as there is nothing in the circumstances of the case to render this improbable.

Of the *occasion* on which the psalm was composed we have no information. There is nothing in the title to indicate this, nor is there anything in the psalm itself which would connect it with any known events in the Jewish history. There are no local allusions, there are no names mentioned, there are no circumstances referred to, which enable us to determine the time of its composition.

The *object* of the psalm seems to be to set forth *the value and importance of spiritual religion as compared with a mere religion of forms.* It is one among numerous portions of the Old Testament which show that the Jewish religion *contemplated* and *required* spirituality in its worshippers, and that it was not designed to be merely formal. There was, indeed, great tendency among the Jewish people to rely on the forms of religion, and it must be admitted that there was not a little in their modes of worship which went to foster this unless there was constant vigilance on the part of the worshipper, and on the part of the public teachers of religion. At the time when this psalm was composed, it would seem that there was a general reliance on the mere ceremonies of public worship; that much of the spirituality of religion had vanished; and that under the forms of religion, and connected with a decent and even scrupulous attention to them, there was a great, if not general, prevalence, of moral corruption among the people. See vers. 16-21.

In the composition of the psalm, therefore, the author represents a scene of solemn judgment; describes God as coming with pomp, and amidst fire and

PSALM L.

A Psalm [1] of Asaph.

THE [e] mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

[1] Or, *for*. [e] Isa. ix. 6.

tempests, to pronounce a sentence on man; and then, as in his presence, and as amidst these solemn scenes, shows what will be found to be true piety; what will meet with the approbation, and what will incur the disapprobation, of God.

The psalm may be regarded as composed of the following parts.

I. A solemn representation of the scenes of judgment; of God as coming to judge his professed people, assembling together those who had avowed themselves to be his friends, and who had pledged themselves to be his amidst the solemn scenes of sacrifice, vers. 1-6.

In this part of the psalm there are the following things:

(*a*) A general summons to the world, from the rising to the setting sun, ver. 1.

(*b*) The statement that the great principles on which all would be determined would proceed out of Zion, or would be such as were inculcated there in the worship of God, ver. 2.

(*c*) A description of God as coming to judgment amidst fire and tempest, ver. 3.

(*d*) A general call to the heavens and the earth, that His people might be summoned from all quarters with reference to the final sentence, vers. 4, 5.

(*e*) A statement that perfect justice would be done, which the very heavens would reveal, for that God was himself the judge, ver. 6.

II. A declaration of the great principles on which the judgment would proceed, and by which the issue would be determined. It would not be by an observance of the mere external forms of devotion, but by spiritual religion; by a sincere worship of God; by a holy life, vers. 7-23.

This portion of the psalm is divided into two parts: the *first*, showing that it is not by mere outward forms that acceptance can be found with God, but that there must be, under these forms, pure and spiritual religion, vers. 7-15; and the *second*, that the wicked cannot hope to meet with the favour of God, though they do observe these forms, vers. 16-23.

First. It is not by mere external forms that acceptance can be found with God, vers. 7-15.

(*a*) A statement of the fact, and of the grounds of the fact, that God will testify against them, vers. 7, 8.

(*b*) The mere offering of sacrifices cannot be acceptable to Him. He does not *need* their sacrifices, as all the beasts of the world are His, vers. 9-13.

(*c*) Only praise—spiritual worship—humble trust in him—can be admitted as true righteousness; as that which will be acceptable to him, vers. 14, 15.

Second. The wicked cannot be accepted and approved though they do observe the forms of religion, vers. 16-23.

(*a*) Such men, though in the priestly office, cannot be regarded as appointed by God to declare his will, or to represent him on earth, vers. 16, 17.

(*b*) A description of the actual conduct of many of those who professed to be His friends; who were rigid in their observances of the external forms of religion, and who were even in the priestly office, vers. 18-21.

(*c*) As before (vers. 14, 15);—only the righteous—the spiritually minded—the upright—can in such a solemn trial meet with the approbation of God, vers. 22, 23.

This psalm, therefore, is one of the most instructive portions of the Old Testament, as setting forth the necessity of spiritual religion, and the fact that a mere observance of forms can never constitute that righteousness which will make men acceptable to God.

1. *The mighty God*, even *the* LORD. Even *Jehovah*,—for this is the original word. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this "The God of gods, the Lord." De Wette renders it, "God, God Jehovah, speaks." Prof. Alexander, "The Almighty, God,

2 Out *f* of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

3 Our God shall come, *g* and shall not keep silence; a *h* fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

f Ps. lxviii. 24. *g* Rev. xxii. 20. *h* Dan. vii. 10.

Jehovah, speaks;" and remarks that the word "mighty" is not an adjective agreeing with the next word (*the mighty God*), but a substantive in apposition with it. The idea is, that he who speaks is the true God; the Supreme Ruler of the universe. It is *that* God who has a right to call the world to judgment, and who has power to execute his will. ¶ *Hath spoken.* Or rather, *speaks.* That is, the psalmist represents him as now speaking, and as calling the world to judgment. ¶ *And called the earth.* Addressed all the inhabitants of the world; all dwellers on the earth. ¶ *From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.* From the place where the sun seems to rise, to the place where it seems to set;—that is, all the world. Comp. Notes on Isa. lix. 19. See also Mal. i. 11; Ps. cxiii. 3. The call is made to all the earth; to all the human race. The scene is imaginary as represented by the psalmist, but it is founded on a true representation of what will occur—of the universal judgment, when all nations shall be summoned to appear before the final Judge. See Matt. xxv. 32; Rev. xx. 11–14.

2. *Out of Zion.* The place where God was worshipped, and where he dwelt. Comp. Notes on Isa. ii. 3. ¶ *The perfection of beauty.* See Notes on Ps. xlviii. 2. ¶ *God hath shined.* Has shined forth, or has caused light and splendour to appear. Comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxx. 2; xciv. 1 (see *marg.*) The meaning here is, that the great principles which are to determine the destiny of mankind in the final judgment are those which proceed from Zion; or, those which are taught in the religion of Zion; they are those which are inculcated through the church of God. God has there made known his law; he has stated the principles on which he governs, and on which he will judge the world.

3. *Our God shall come.* That is, he will come to judgment. This language is derived from the supposition that God *will* judge the world, and it shows that this doctrine was understood and believed by the Hebrews. The New Testament has stated the fact that this will be done by the coming of his Son Jesus Christ to gather the nations before him, and to pronounce the final sentence on mankind: Matt. xxv. 31; Acts xvii. 31; x. 42; John v. 22. ¶ *And shall not keep silence.* That is, he will come forth and *express* his judgment on the conduct of mankind. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 1. He *seems* now to be silent. No voice is heard. No sentence is pronounced. But this will not always be the case. The time is coming when he will manifest himself, and will no longer be silent as to the conduct and character of men, but will pronounce a sentence, fixing their destiny according to their character. ¶ *A fire shall devour before him.* Comp. Notes on 2 Thess. i. 8; Heb. x. 27. The *language* here is undoubtedly taken from the representation of God as he manifested himself at Mount Sinai. Thus, in Ex. xix. 16, 18, it is said, "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. ¶ *And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.* The word here used—סָעַר, *saar*—means properly to shudder; to shiver; and then

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

5 Gather [i] my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant [k] with me by sacrifice.

i Matt. xxiv. 31.

k Heb. xii. 24.

it is employed to denote the commotion and raging of a tempest. The allusion is doubtless to the descent on Mount Sinai (Ex. xix. 16), and to the storm accompanied by thunder and lightning which beat upon the mountain when God descended on it to give his law. The whole is designed to represent God as clothed with appropriate majesty when judgment is to be pronounced upon the world.

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above.* He will call on all the universe; he will summon all worlds. The meaning here is, not that he will gather those who are in heaven to be judged, but that he will call on the inhabitants of all worlds to be his witnesses; to bear their attestation to the justice of his sentence. See ver. 6. The phrase "from above" does not, of course, refer to the heavens as being above *God*, but to the heavens as they appear to men to be above themselves. ¶ *And to the earth.* To all the dwellers upon the earth; *to the whole universe.* He makes this universal appeal with the confident assurance that his final sentence will be approved; that the universe will see and admit that it is just. See Rev. xv. 3; xix. 1–3. There can be no doubt that the universe, as such, will approve the ultimate sentence that will be pronounced on mankind. ¶ *That he may judge his people.* That is, all these arrangements—this coming with fire and tempest, and this universal appeal—will be preparatory to the judging of his people, or in order that the judgment may be conducted with due solemnity and propriety. The idea is, that an event so momentous should be conducted in a way fitted to produce an appropriate impression; so conducted, that there would be a universal conviction of the justice and impartiality of the sentence. The reference here is particularly to his professed "*people*," that is, to determine whether they were truly his, for that is the main subject of the psalm, though the *language* is derived from the solemnities appropriate to the universal judgment.

5. *Gather my saints together unto me.* This is an address to the messengers employed for assembling those who are to be judged. Similar language is used by the Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 31): "And he [the Son of Man] shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The idea is, that God will bring them, or assemble them together. All this is language derived from the notion of a universal judgment, *as if* the scattered people of God were thus gathered together by special messengers sent out for this purpose. The word "saints" here refers to those who are truly his people. The object—the purpose—of the judgment is to assemble in heaven those who are sincerely his friends; or, as the Saviour expresses it (Matt. xxiv. 31), his "*elect.*" Yet in order to this, or in order to determine who *are* his true people, there will be a larger gathering—an assembling of all the dwellers on the earth. ¶ *Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.* Ex. xxiv. 6, 7. Comp. Notes on Heb. ix. 19–22. The idea here is, that they are the professed people of God; that they have entered into a solemn covenant-relation to him, or have bound themselves in the most solemn manner to be his; that they have done this in connexion with the sacrifices which accompany their worship; that they have brought their sacrifices or bloody offerings as a pledge that they mean to be his, and will be his. Over

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God [l] *is* judge himself. Selah.

l Rev. xx. 12. m Micah vi. 1—8.

7 Hear, [m] O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God.

these solemn sacrifices made to him, they have bound themselves to be the Lord's; and the purpose of the judgment now is, to determine whether this was sincere, and whether they have been faithful to their vows. As applied to professed believers under the Christian system, the *idea* here presented would be, that the vow to be the Lord's has been made over the body and blood of the Redeemer once offered as a sacrifice, and that by partaking of the memorials of that sacrifice they have entered into a solemn "covenant" to be his. Nothing more solemn can be conceived than a "covenant" or pledge entered into in such a manner; and yet nothing is more painfully certain than that the process of a judgment will be necessary to determine in what cases it is genuine; for the mere outward act, no matter how solemn, does not of necessity decide the question whether he who performs it will enter into heaven.

6. *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.* Shall make it known, or announce it. That is, the heavens—the heavenly inhabitants—will bear witness to the justness of the sentence, or will approve the sentence. See Notes on ver. 4. Comp. Ps. xcvii. 6. ¶ *For God* is *judge himself.* The judgment is not committed to mortal men, or even to angels. Creatures, even the most exalted and pure, might err in such a work as that of judging the world. That judgment, to be correct, must be founded on a perfect knowledge of the heart, and on a clear and complete understanding of all the thoughts, the motives, the words, the deeds of all men. It cannot be supposed that any created being, however exalted, could possess all this knowledge, and it cannot be supposed that any created being, however pure, could be so endowed as to be secure against error in pronouncing a judgment on the countless millions of men. But God combines all these in himself;—a perfect knowledge of all that has ever occurred on earth, and of the motives and feelings of every creature,—and, at the same time, absolute purity and impartiality; therefore his judgment must be such that the universe will see that it is just. It may be added here that as the New Testament has stated (see Notes on ver. 3) that the judgment of the world in the last day will be committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, the considerations just suggested prove that he is Divine. The immediate point in the passage before us is, that the fact that *God* will preside in the judgment, demonstrates that the acts of judgment will be *right*, and will be such as the "heavens"—the universe—will approve; such, that all worlds will proclaim them to be right. There is no higher evidence that a thing is right, and that it ought to be done, than the fact that God has done it. Comp. Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. xxxix. 9.

7. *Hear, O my people, and I will speak.* God himself is now introduced as speaking, and as stating the principles on which the judgment will proceed. The previous verses are introductory, or are designed to bring the scene of the judgment before the mind. The solemn scene now opens, and God himself speaks, especially as rebuking the disposition to rely on the mere forms of religion, while its spirituality and its power are denied. The purpose of the whole is, by asking how these things will appear in the judgment, to imply the vanity of *mere* forms of religion now. The particular address is made to the "people" of God, or to "Israel," because the purpose of the psalmist was to rebuke the prevailing tendency

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, *to have been* continually before me.

9 I [n] will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he-goats out of thy folds:

[n] Acts xvii. 25; Heb. x. 4, 6.

to rely on outward forms. ¶ *O Israel, and I will testify against thee.* In the judgment. In view of those scenes, and as *at* that time, I will *now* bear this solemn testimony against the views which you entertain on the subject of religion, and the practices which prevail in your worship. ¶ *I* am *God,* even *thy God.* I am the true God, and therefore I have a right to speak; I am *thy* God—the God who has been the Protector of thy people,—acknowledged as the God of the nation,—and therefore I claim the right to declare the great principles which pertain to true worship, and which constitute true religion.

8. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings.* On the words *sacrifices* and *burnt-offerings* here used, see Notes on Isa. i. 11. The meaning is, "I do not reprove or rebuke you in respect to the withholding of sacrifices. I do not charge you with neglecting the offering of such sacrifices. I do not accuse the nation of indifference in regard to the external rites or duties of religion. It is not on this ground that you are to be blamed or condemned; for that duty is outwardly and publicly performed. I do not say that such offerings are wrong; I do not say that there has been any failure in the external duties of worship. The charge—the reproof—relates to other matters; to the want of a proper spirit, to the withholding of the heart, in connexion with such offerings." ¶ To have been *continually before me.* The words "to have been" are inserted by the translators, and weaken the sense. The simple idea is, that their offerings *were* continually before him; that is, they were constantly made. He had no charge of neglect in this respect to bring against them. The insertion of the words "to have been" would seem to imply that though they had neglected this external rite, it was a matter of no consequence; whereas the simple meaning is, that they were *not* chargeable with this neglect, or that there was *no* cause of complaint on this point. It was on other grounds altogether that a charge was brought against them. It was, as the following verses show, because they supposed there was special *merit* in such offerings; because they supposed that they laid God under obligation by so constant and so expensive offerings, as if they did not already belong to him, or as if he needed them; and because, while they did this, they withheld the very offering which he required, and without which all other sacrifices would be vain and worthless,—a sincere, humble, thankful heart.

9. *I will take no bullock out of thy house.* Bullocks were offered regularly in the Hebrew service and sacrifice (Ex. xxix. 11, 36; Lev. iv. 4; 1 Kings xviii. 23, 33); and it is with reference to this that the language is used here. In obedience to the law it was right and proper to offer such sacrifices; and the design here is not to express disapprobation of these offerings in themselves considered. On this subject—on the external compliance with the law in this respect—God says (ver. 8) that he had no cause to complain against them. It was only with respect to the design and the spirit with which they did this, that the language in this verse and the following verses is used. The idea which it is the purpose of these verses to suggest is, that God did not *need* such offerings; that they were not to be made *as if* he needed them; and that if he needed such he was not *dependent* on them, for all the beasts of the earth and all the fowls of the mountains were his, and could be taken for that purpose; and that

10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field *are* [1] mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

[1] *with me.*

if he took what was claimed to be theirs—the bullocks and the goats—he did not wrong them, for all were his, and he claimed only his own. ¶ Nor *he-goats out of thy folds.* Goats were also offered in sacrifice. Lev. iii. 12; iv. 24; x. 16: Num. xv. 27.

10. *For every beast of the forest* is *mine.* All the beasts that roam at large in the wilderness; all that are untamed and unclaimed by man. The idea is, that even if God *needed* such offerings, he was not dependent on them,—for the numberless beasts that roamed at large as his own would yield an ample supply. ¶ And *the cattle upon a thousand hills.* This may mean either the cattle that roamed by thousands on the hills, or the cattle on numberless hills. The Hebrew will bear either construction. The former is most likely to be the meaning. The allusion is probably to the animals that were pastured in great numbers on the hills, and that were claimed by men. The idea is, that all—whether wild or tame—belonged to God, and he had a right to them, to dispose of them as he pleased. He was not, therefore, in any way dependent on sacrifices. It is a beautiful and impressive thought, that the *property* in all these animals—in all living things on the earth—is in God, and that he has a right to dispose of them as he pleases. What man owns, he owns under God, and has no right to complain when God comes and asserts his superior claim to dispose of it at his pleasure. God has never given to man the absolute proprietorship in *any* thing; nor does he invade our rights when he comes and claims what we possess, or when in any way he removes what is most valuable to us. Comp. Job i. 21.

11. *I know all the fowls of the mountains.* That is, I am fully acquainted with their numbers; their nature; their habits; their residence. I have such a knowledge of them that I could appropriate them to my own use if I were in need of them. I am not, therefore, dependent on men to offer them, for I can use them as I please. ¶ *And the wild beasts of the field* are *mine.* Marg., *with me.* That is, they are before me. They are never out of my presence. At any time, therefore, I could use them as I might need them. The word rendered *wild beasts*—זִיז, *ziz*—means any moving thing; and the idea here is, whatever moves in the field, or roams abroad. Everything is his—whether on the mountains, in the forest, or in the cultivated field.

12. *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.* I should not have occasion to apply to you; I should not be dependent on you. ¶ *For the world* is *mine.* The earth; all that has been created. ¶ *And the fulness thereof.* All that fills the world; all that exists upon it. The whole is at his disposal; to all that the earth produces he has a right. This language is used to show the absurdity of the supposition that he was in any way dependent on man, or that the offering of sacrifice could be supposed in any way to lay him under obligation.

13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* This is said to show still further the absurdity of the views which seem to have prevailed among those who offered sacrifices. They offered them *as if* they were needed by God; *as if* they laid him under obligation; *as if* in some way they contributed to his happiness, or were essential to his welfare. The only supposition on which this could be true was, that he

14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.

15 And call[o] upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver

[o] Ps. cvii. 6.

needed the flesh of the one for food, and the blood of the other for drink; or that he was sustained as creatures are. Yet this was a supposition, which, when it was stated in a formal manner, must be at once seen to be absurd; and hence the emphatic question in this verse. It may serve to illustrate this, also, to remark, that, among the heathen, the opinion did undoubtedly prevail that the gods ate and drank what was offered to them in sacrifice; whereas the truth was, that these things were consumed by the priests who attended on heathen altars, and conducted the devotions of heathen temples, and who found that it contributed much to their own support, and did much to secure the liberality of the people, to keep up the impression that what was thus offered was consumed by the gods. God appeals here to his own people in this earnest manner because it was to be presumed that *they* had higher conceptions of him than the heathen had; and that, enlightened as they were, they could not for a moment suppose these offerings necessary for him. This is one of the passages in the Old Testament which imply that God is a Spirit, and that, as such, he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Comp. John iv. 24.

14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* The word rendered *offer* in this place —זְבַח, *zebahh* — means properly *sacrifice.* So it is rendered by the LXX., *θῦσον,*—and by the Vulgate, *immola.* The word is used, doubtless, with design,—to show what was the *kind* of sacrifice with which God would be pleased, and which he would approve. It was not the mere *sacrifice* of animals, as they commonly understood the term; it was not the mere presentation of the bodies and the blood of slain beasts; it was an offering which proceeded from the heart, and which was expressive of gratitude and praise. This is not to be understood as implying that God did not require or approve of the offering of bloody sacrifices, but as implying that a higher sacrifice was necessary; that these would be vain and worthless unless they were accompanied with the offerings of the heart; and that his worship, even amidst outward forms, was to be a spiritual worship. ¶ *And pay thy vows unto the Most High.* To the true God, the most exalted Being in the universe. The word *vows* here—נֶדֶר, *neder*—means properly a vow or promise; and then, a thing vowed; a votive offering, a sacrifice. The idea seems to be, that the true notion to be attached to the sacrifices which were prescribed and required was, that they were to be regarded as expressions of internal feelings and purposes; of penitence; of a deep sense of sin; of gratitude and love; and that the design of such sacrifices was not fulfilled unless the "vows" or pious purposes implied in the very nature of sacrifices and offerings were carried out in the life and conduct. They were not, therefore, to come merely with these offerings, and then feel that all the purpose of worship was accomplished. They were to carry out the true design of them by lives corresponding with the idea intended by such sacrifices—lives full of penitence, gratitude, love, obedience, submission, devotion. This only could be acceptable worship. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 11–17. See also Ps. lxxvi. 11; Eccles. v. 5.

15. *And call upon me in the day of trouble.* This is a part of real religion as truly as praise is, ver. 14. This is also the duty and the privilege of all the true worshippers of God. To do this shows where the heart is, as really as direct acts of praise and thanksgiving. The purpose of all that is said here is to show that true

thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What [p] hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

[p] Isa. i. 11—15; John iv. 24.

religion—the proper service of God—does not consist in the mere offering of sacrifice, but that it is of a spiritual nature, and that the offering of sacrifice is of no value unless it is accompanied by corresponding acts of spiritual religion, showing that the heart has a proper appreciation of the mercies of God, and that it truly confides in him. Such spirituality in religion is expressed by acts of praise (ver. 14); but it is also as clearly expressed (ver. 15) by going to God in times of trouble, and rolling the burdens of life on his arm, and seeking consolation in him. ¶ *I will deliver thee.* I will deliver thee from trouble. This will occur (*a*) either in this life, in accordance with the frequent promises of his word (comp. Notes on Ps. xlvi. 1); or (*b*) wholly in the future world, where all who love God will be completely and for ever delivered from all forms of sorrow. ¶ *And thou shalt glorify me.* That is, Thou wilt honour me, or do me honour, by thus coming to me with confidence in the day of calamity. There is no way in which we can honour God more, or show more clearly that we truly confide in him, than by going to him when everything seems to be dark; when his own ways and dealings are wholly incomprehensible to us, and committing all into his hands.

16. *But unto the wicked God saith.* This commences a second part of the subject. See the introduction. Thus far the psalm had reference to those who were merely external worshippers, or mere formalists, as showing that such could not be approved and accepted in the day of judgment; that spiritual religion—the offering of the *heart* — was necessary in order to acceptance with God. In this part of the psalm the same principles are applied to those who actually *violate* the law which they profess to receive as prescribing the rules of true religion, and which they profess to teach to others. The design of the psalm is not merely to reprove the mass of the people as mere formalists in religion, but especially to reprove the leaders and teachers of the people, who, under the form of religion, gave themselves up to a course of life wholly inconsistent with the true service of God. The address here, therefore, is to those who, while they professed to be teachers of religion, and to lead the devotions of others, gave themselves up to abandoned lives. ¶ *What hast thou to do.* What right hast thou to do this? How can men, who lead such lives, consistently and properly do this? The idea is, that they who profess to declare the law of a holy God should be themselves holy; that they who profess to teach the principles and doctrines of true religion should themselves be examples of purity and holiness. ¶ *To declare my statutes.* My laws. This evidently refers rather to the teaching of others than to the profession of their own faith. The language would be applicable to the priests under the Jewish system, who were expected not only to conduct the outward services of religion, but also to instruct the people; to explain the principles of religion; to be the guides and teachers of others. Comp. Mal. ii. 7. There is a striking resemblance between the language used in this part of the psalm (vers. 16–20) and the language of the apostle Paul in Rom. ii. 17–23; and it would seem probable that the apostle in that passage had this portion of the psalm in his eye. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *Or* that *thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth.* Either as professing faith in it, and a purpose

17 Seeing that thou [q] hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him,

q Prov. v. 12, 13.

and [1] hast been partaker with adulterers.

19 Thou [2] givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

20 Thou sittest *and* speakest

[1] *thy portion* was. [2] *sendest.*

to be governed by it,—or, more probably, as explaining it to others. The "*covenant*" here is equivalent to the *law* of God, or the principles of his religion; and the idea is, that he who undertakes to explain that to others, should himself be a holy man. He can have no *right* to attempt to explain it, if he is otherwise; he cannot hope to be *able* to explain it, unless he himself sees and appreciates its truth and beauty. This is as true now of the Gospel as it was of the law. A wicked man can have no right to undertake the work of the Christian ministry, nor can he be able to explain to others what he himself does not understand.

17. *Seeing thou hatest instruction.* That is, He is unwilling himself to be taught. He will not learn the true nature of religion, and yet he presumes to instruct others. Comp. Notes on Rom. ii. 21. ¶ *And castest my words behind thee.* He treated them with contempt, or as unworthy of attention. He did not regard them as worthy of being *retained*, but threw them contemptuously away.

18. *When thou sawest a thief.* When you have seen or found one who was intending to commit theft, then (instead of rebuking or exposing him) you have been willing to act with him, and to divide the profits. The words "when thou *sawest*" would seem to imply readiness and willingness to engage with them, as *at first sight.* Whenever there was an opportunity to share in the results of theft, they were ready to engage in it. The main *point* in this is, that they were willing to do so even when observing the outward duties of religion, and when professing to be the true worshippers of God. A similar sentiment occurs in Rom. ii. 21. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *Then thou consentedst with him.* Literally, Thou didst delight in him, or hadst pleasure in him. He was a man after thine own heart. Thou wast at once on good terms with him. ¶ *And hast been partaker with adulterers.* Marg., as in Heb., *thy portion was with adulterers.* This was a common vice among the Jewish people. See Notes on Rom. ii. 22. The idea here is, that they were associated in practice with adulterers; they were guilty of that crime as others were. The point of the remark here is, that they did this under the cloak of piety, and when they were scrupulous and faithful in offering sacrifices, and in performing all the external rites of religion.

19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil.* Marg., as in Heb., *thou sendest.* That is, they gave it up to evil; they employed it in evil:—in falsehood, malice, deceit, slander, deception, detraction. ¶ *And thy tongue frameth deceit.* The word rendered *frameth* means properly to bind, to fasten; and then, to contrive, to frame. The meaning is, that it was employed in the work of deceit; that is, it was employed in devising and executing purposes of fraud and falsehood.

20. *Thou sittest* and *speakest against thy brother.* To the general character of falsehood and slander there is now added the fact that they were guilty of this in the most aggravated manner conceivable—against their nearest relations, the members of their own families. They were not only guilty of the crime against neighbours—against

against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

21 These *things* hast thou done, and *r* I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself; *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

r Eccles. viii. 11, 12; Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

strangers—against persons to whom they sustained no near relationship; but against those of their own households, — those whose characters, on that account, ought to have been specially dear to them. The words "*thou sittest*" probably refer to the fact that they would do this when enjoying social intercourse with them; in confidential conversation; when words of peace, and not of slander, might be properly expected. The word "brother" *might* be used as denoting any other man, or any one of the same nation; but the phrase which is added, "thine own mother's son," shows that it is here to be taken in the strictest sense. ¶ *Thou slanderest.* Literally, *Thou givest to ruin.* Prof. Alexander renders it, *Thou wilt aim a blow.* The LXX., the Vulgate, Luther, and De Wette understand it of slander. ¶ *Thine own mother's son.* It is to be remembered that where polygamy prevailed there would be many children in the same family who had the same father, but not the same mother. The nearest relationship, therefore, was where there was the same mother as well as the same father. To speak of a brother, in the strictest sense, and as implying the nearest relationship, it would be natural to speak of one as having the same mother. The idea here is, that while professing religion, and performing its external rites with the most scrupulous care, they were guilty of the basest crimes, and showed an entire want of moral principle and of natural affection. External worship, however zealously performed, could not be acceptable in such circumstances to a holy God.

21. *These* things *hast thou done, and I kept silence.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xviii. 4. The meaning is, that while they did these things,—while they committed these abominations, —he did not interfere. He did not come forth in his anger to destroy them. He had borne all this with patience. He had borne this until it was now time that he should interpose (ver. 3), and state the true principles of his government, and warn them of the consequences of such a course of sin and hypocrisy. Comp. Notes on Acts xvii. 30. ¶ *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether* such an one *as thyself.* The idea here is, that they thought or imagined that God was just like themselves in the matter under consideration, and they acted under this impression; or, in other words, the fair interpretation of their conduct was that they thus regarded God. That is, they supposed that *God* would be satisfied with the *forms* of religion, as *they* were; that all he required was the proper offering of sacrifice, according to *their* views of the nature of religion; that he did not regard principle, justice, pure morality, sincerity, even as they themselves did not; and that he would not be strict to punish sin, or to reprove them for it, if these forms were kept up, even as *they* were not disposed to be rigid on the subject of sin. ¶ But *I will reprove thee.* I will rebuke thee alike for thy sins, and for this view of the nature of religion. ¶ *And set* them *in order.* Literally, I will *array* them; that is, I will draw them out to view in their appropriate ranks and orders, as soldiers are drawn up in martial array. They shall be so arranged and classified that they may be seen distinctly. ¶ *Before thine eyes.* So that they may be plainly seen. The meaning is, that they would have a clear and impressive view of them: they would be made to see them as

22 Now consider this, ye that [s]forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

[s] Ps. ix. 17.

23 Whoso offereth praise [t] glorifieth me: and to him that [1] ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I show the salvation of God.

[t] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [1] *disposeth* his *way.*

they were. This might be done then, as it is done now, either (*a*) by their being set before their minds and hearts, so that they would see and feel the enormity of sin, to wit, by conviction for it; or (*b*) by sending such punishment on them for their sins that they might *measure* the guilt and the number of their transgressions by the penalties which would be inflicted. In some way all sinners will yet be made to see the nature and the extent of their guilt before God.

22. *Now consider this.* Understand this; give attention to this. The word *now* does not well express the force of the original. The Hebrew word is not an adverb of *time,* but a particle denoting *entreaty,* and would be better rendered by, "Oh, consider this;" or, "Consider this, I beseech you." The matter is presented to them as that which deserved their most solemn attention. ¶ *Ye that forget God.* Who really forget him though you are professedly engaged in his worship; who, amidst the forms of religion, are actually living in entire forgetfulness of the just claims and of the true character of God. ¶ *Lest I tear* you *in pieces.* Language derived from the fury of a ravenous beast tearing his victim from limb to limb. ¶ *And* there be *none to deliver.* As none can do when God rises up in his wrath to inflict vengeance. None would *venture* to interpose; none *could* rescue from his hand. There *is* a point of time in relation to all sinners when no one, not even the Redeemer — the great and merciful Mediator—will interpose to save; when the sinner will be left to be dealt with by simple, pure, unmixed and unmitigated *justice;* when mercy and kindness will have done their work in regard to them in vain; and when they will be left to the *mere desert* of their sins. At that point there is no power that can deliver them.

23. *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* That is, he truly honours me; he is a true worshipper; he meets with my approbation. The word here rendered "*offereth*" is the same which is used in ver. 14, and means *he that sacrifices*:—here meaning, he that presents the sacrifice of praise. So the LXX.: "the sacrifice of praise glorifies me." So the Vulgate. The idea is, that the worship which God requires is *praise;* it is not the mere external act of homage; it is not the presentation of a bloody sacrifice; it is not the mere bending of the knee; it is not a mere outward form:—it is that which proceeds from the heart, and which shows that there is there a spirit of true thankfulness, adoration, and love. ¶ *And to him that ordereth* his *conversation* aright. Marg., as in Heb., *that disposeth his way.* Or, more literally, "To him that *prepares* or *plans* his way;"—that is, to him who is attentive to his going; who seeks to walk in the right path; who is anxious to go in the road that leads to a happier world; who is careful that all his conduct shall be in accordance with the rules which God has prescribed. ¶ *Will I show the salvation of God.* This may mean either, "I, the author of the psalm as a teacher" (comp. Ps. xxxii. 8); or, "I" as referring to God,—as a promise that *He* would instruct such an one. The latter is the probable meaning, as it is God that has been speaking in the previous verse. The "salvation of God" is the salvation of which God is the author; or, which he alone can give. The *idea* here is, that where there is a true

desire to find the way of truth and salvation, God will impart needful instruction. He will not suffer such an one to wander away and be lost. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 9.

The general ideas in the psalm, therefore, are (1) That there is to be a solemn judgment of mankind; (2) that the issues of that judgment will not be determined by the observance of the external forms of religion; (3) that God will judge men impartially for their sins, though they observe those forms of religion; and (4) that no worship of God can be acceptable which does not spring from the heart.

PSALM LI.

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and the contents of it accord with this supposition, and with the statement in the title in regard to the occasion on which it was composed. There would be no difficulty on the subject, and no ground for hesitation, in regard to the author and the occasion on which it was composed, if it were not for the prayer in ver. 18, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem," which, it has been maintained by De Wette, Rosenmüller, Venema, and others, must have been written in the time of the Babylonish exile. Except this, it is admitted on all hands that the psalm in its composition accords entirely with the statement in the title, that it was composed by David. It has, in fact, been generally admitted that the psalm *was* composed by David, though it is the opinion of Rosenmüller, Venema, and Doederlein, that the last two verses were added by a later hand.

According to the title, the psalm was composed on occasion of the great fault and crime in the life of David, and as an expression of his penitence in view of his sin. On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. We are not to suppose that this title was prefixed to the psalm by David himself, but the use to be made of it by committing it to the "chief Musician," or to the overseer of the music in the public worship of God, shows that the psalm was considered as designed to be used in public, and was not a mere expression of the private feelings of the author. It was, doubtless, commonly understood (and was probably so intended by David himself) that it was to be used as a *public* expression of his penitence in view of his crime; and both the fact of its composition, and the manner in which it was to be used, were to be interpreted as indicating his willingness that the widest publicity should be given to his confession, and that the memory of the crime and of his penitence should be perpetuated in all ages of the world. The phrase in the title, "A *Psalm* of David," denotes that it was to be used for public worship, or as connected with praise. It was designed not merely to express his private feelings, but was intended to be employed in the solemn services of public devotion. See introd. to Ps. iii.

The phrase "when Nathan the prophet came unto him," refers to the fact recorded in 2 Sam. xii. 1-13. It means that the psalm was the *result* of the visit of Nathan to him; or that it records the feelings of the author, when the sense of his sin had been brought to his mind by the faithful message of the prophet. We may suppose that the record of his feelings was made without delay, for the psalm bears all the marks of having been composed under the deepest feeling, and not of being the result of calm reflection. On the phrase "after he had gone in to Bath-sheba," see the sad record in 2 Sam. xi. 1–5.

De Wette, however, maintains that the psalm could not have been composed by David, but that it must have been written in the time of the Babylonish exile. The only argument which he adduces in favour of this opinion is the prayer in ver. 18, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," which, he says, could not have been a prayer offered by David, as there was in his time nothing which would make this prayer proper. Jerusalem was not then in ruins. It had been strongly fortified by David himself, and required no particular interposition of God as if to *restore* walls that had been thrown down; whereas, in the time of the exile, such a prayer would have been eminently proper, and would be a natural petition for one who loved his country, and who, as an expression of his own penitence, was desirous of doing all he could for the cause of religion. The difficulty will be more appropriately met in the Notes on those verses. It may be observed here, however, that possibly the expression "Build thou the

PSALM LI.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David, when *u* Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to *v* Bath-sheba.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kind-

u 2 Sam. xii. 1, etc. *v* 2 Sam. xi. 2, 4.

walls of Jerusalem," *may* be used in a figurative or spiritual sense, expressive of a desire that God would bless his people; that he would interpose in their behalf; that he would be their protector and friend; that he would do for them what would be well expressed by building strong and secure walls around a city. But it may be asked, also, Is it absolutely certain that when the psalm was composed the work of enclosing the city of Jerusalem with walls had been completed? May it not have been, in fact, that at that very time David was engaged in *carrying out* his design of rendering the city impregnable by walls and towers, and that in the midst of his intense sorrow for his own sin, though so heinous and aggravated, his heart may have turned to that which was so dear to him as an object to be accomplished, and that even then, in connexion with his bitter repentance for his sin, he may have prayed that God would favour that great design? It is no evidence that our sorrow for sin is not deep and genuine, that, even in our expressions of penitence, our heart turns to Zion—to the Church—to the great work which the Church is accomplishing,—and that, though our prayers *began* with a reference to our own sin, they should *close* with a petition that God would bless his people, and fulfil the great purposes so near to the heart of piety in reference to the progress of true religion in the world. Indeed, from the very narrative in 2 Sam. (chap. vi.–xii.) it would seem probable that the work of fortifying the city of Jerusalem, contemplated by David, was not yet completed, when he committed the crime for which this psalm is the expression of penitence. It was a work of years to do this: and it is not improbable that the guilty transaction to which this psalm refers occurred in the very midst of his design for the defence and protection of the capital of his kingdom.

The psalm consists of two parts:—

I. In the first (vers. 1-12), the psalmist confesses his guilt, and prays for pardon. He begins with an earnest plea for mercy (vers. 1-2); he humbly acknowledges his offence, without any attempt to vindicate himself, or to apologise for it (vers. 3-6); he pleads with God to cleanse him, to pardon him, to create in him a new heart, and not to cast him off or to take his Holy Spirit from him (vers. 7-12).

II. In the second part (vers. 13-19) he shows how he would manifest his sense of the Divine mercy if he was forgiven:—expressing the purpose to lead a new life; to devote himself to the duties of religion; to do all in his power to repair the evils of his conduct, and especially to induce others to avoid the way of sin, warning them by his example. He says that he would teach transgressors the true ways of God, and that sinners would be converted to Him, ver. 13; that he would sing aloud the praise of God, vers. 14, 15; that he would offer to God the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, vers. 16, 17; and he then pleads (vers. 18, 19), that God would interpose and bless Zion, that the great work might be completed in which he had been engaged in defending the city, and in preparing a place which would be secure, where God might be worshipped, and where sacrifices and offerings might perpetually ascend on his altar.

1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* This is the utterance of a full heart; a heart crushed and broken by the consciousness of sin. The psalmist had been made to see his great guilt; and his first act is to cry out for mercy. There is no attempt to excuse his sin, or to apologise for it; there is no effort to vindicate his conduct; there is no complaint of the righteousness of that holy law which condemned him. It was *guilt* that was before his mind; guilt only; deep and dreadful guilt. The appeal properly expresses the state of a mind that is overwhelmed at the remembrance of crime, and that comes with earnestness to God to plead for pardon. The only hope of a sinner when crushed with the consciousness of sin is the mercy of God; and the plea for that mercy will be urged in

ness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies [w] blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash [x] me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge [y] my

[w] Isa. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; Acts iii. 19.
[x] Rev. i. 5.
[y] Prov. xxviii. 13.

the most earnest and impassioned language that the mind can employ. ¶ *According to thy lovingkindness.* On the meaning of the word here used, see Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 7. (*a*) The *ground* of his hope was the compassion of God: (*b*) the *measure* of that hope was His boundless beneficence; or, in other words, he felt that there was need of *all* the compassion of a God. His sin was so great, his offence was so aggravated, that he could have no hope but in a Being of infinite compassion, and he felt that the need of mercy in his case could be measured and covered *only* by that infinite compassion. ¶ *According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.* The same idea occurs here also. The psalmist fixed his eye on the *vastness* of the Divine mercy; on the numberless *acts* of that mercy toward the guilty; here he found his hope, and here alone. Every instance of extraordinary mercy which had occurred in the world furnished him now with an argument in his appeal to God;—was an encouragement to him *in* that appeal;—was a ground of hope that his appeal would not be rejected. So to us: every instance in which a great sinner has been forgiven is evidence that we may be forgiven also, and is an encouragement to us to come to God for pardon. See Notes on 1 Tim. i. 16. ¶ *Blot out my transgressions.* In allusion to an account that is kept, or a charge made, when such an account is wiped away, erased, or blotted out. Comp. Ex. xxxii. 32, 33; see Notes on Isa. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; Col. ii. 14. Never was a more earnest appeal made by a sinner than that which is made in this verse; never was there a more sincere cry for mercy. It shows us where we should *begin* in our prayers when we are pressed down with the consciousness of sin,—with a cry for *mercy*, and not an appeal to *justice*; it shows us what is to be the *ground* and the *measure* of our hope—the mere compassion of an infinitely benevolent God; it shows us the place which we must take, and the argument on which we must rely—a place among sinners, and an argument that God has been merciful to great sinners, and that therefore he may be merciful to us.

2. *Wash me throughly from mine iniquity.* Literally, "*Multiply* to wash me." The word rendered *throughly* is a verb, either in the infinitive or imperative mood, and suggests the idea of *multiplying* or *increasing*. The reference is to that which might need constant or repeated washings in order to remove a stain. The word is used, however, adverbially to denote intensity, or thoroughness. On the word *wash* as applicable to sin, see Notes on Isa. i. 16. ¶ *And cleanse me from my sin.* Remove it entirely. Make me wholly pure. See Notes on Isa. i. 16. In what manner he hoped that this would be done is shown in the following portions of the psalm. It was (*a*) by forgiveness of the past, ver. 9; and (*b*) by making the heart pure and holy through the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, vers. 10, 11.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* Literally, I know, or make known. That is, he knew that he was a sinner, and he did not seek to cloak or conceal that fact. He came with the knowledge of it himself; he was willing to make acknowledgment of it before God. There was no attempt to conceal it; to excuse it. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxii. 5. The word "*for*" does not imply that

transgressions; and my sin *is* ever before me.

4 Against [z] thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy [a] sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

[z] 2 Sam. xii. 13.

[a] Luke xv. 21.

he referred to his willingness to confess his sins as an act of merit, but it indicates a state of mind which was necessary to forgiveness, and without which he could not hope for pardon. ¶ *And my sin* is *ever before me.* That is, It is now constantly before my mind. It had not been so until Nathan brought it vividly to his recollection (2 Sam. xii. 1, seq.); but after that it was continually in his view. He could not turn his mind from it. The memory of his guilt followed him; it pressed upon him; it haunted him. It was no wonder that this was so. The only ground of wonder in the case is that it did not occur *before* Nathan made that solemn appeal to him, or that he could have been for a moment insensible to the greatness of his crime. The whole transaction, however, shows that men *may* be guilty of enormous sins, and have for a long time no sense of their criminality; but that *when* the consciousness of guilt is made to come home to the soul, nothing will calm it down. Everything reminds the soul of it; and nothing will drive away its recollection. In such a state the sinner has no refuge—no hope of permanent peace—but in the mercy of God.

4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* That is, the sin, considered as an offence against God, now appeared to him so enormous and so aggravated, that, for the moment, he lost sight of it considered in any other of its bearings. It *was* a sin, as all other sins are, primarily and mainly against God; it derived its chief enormity from that fact. We are not to suppose that David did not believe and notice that he had done wrong to men, or that he had offended against human laws, and against the well-being of society. His crime against Uriah and his family was of the deepest and most aggravated character, but still the offence derived its chief heinousness from the fact that it was a violation of the law of God. The state of mind here illustrated is that which occurs in every case of true penitence. It is not merely because that which has been done is a violation of human law; it is not that it brings us to poverty or disgrace; it is not that it exposes us to punishment on earth from a parent, a teacher, or civil ruler; it is not that it exposes us to punishment in the world to come:—it is that it is of itself, and apart from all other relations and consequences, *an offence against God*; a violation of his pure and holy law; a wrong done against him, and in his sight. Unless there is this feeling there can be no true penitence; and unless there is this feeling there can be no hope of pardon, for God forgives offences only as committed against himself; not as involving us in dangerous consequences, or as committed against our fellow-men. ¶ *And done* this *evil in thy sight.* Or, When thine eye was fixed on me. Comp. Notes on Isa. lxv. 3. God saw what he had done; and David knew, or might have known, that the eye of God was upon him in his wickedness. It was to him then a great aggravation of his sin that he had *dared* to commit it when he *knew* that God saw everything. The presence of a child—or even of an idiot—would restrain men from many acts of sin which they would venture to commit if alone; how much more should the fact that God is always present, and always sees all that is done, restrain us from open and from secret transgression. ¶ *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest.* That thy character might be vindicated in

5 Behold, [b] I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother [1] conceive me.

[b] Eph. ii. 3. [1] *warm.*

all that thou hast said;—in the law which thou hast revealed; in the condemnation of the sin in that law; and in the punishment which thou mayest appoint. That is, he acknowledged his guilt. He did not seek to apologise for it, or to vindicate it. God was right, and he was wrong. The sin deserved all that God in his law *had* declared it to deserve; it deserved all that God by any sentence which he might pass upon him *would* declare it to deserve. The sin was so aggravated that *any* sentence which God might pronounce would not be beyond the measure of its ill-desert. ¶ And *be clear when thou judgest.* Be regarded as right, holy, pure, in the judgment which thou mayest appoint. See this more fully explained in the Notes on Rom. iii. 4.

5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* The object of this important verse is to express the deep sense which David had of his depravity. That sense was derived from the fact that this was not a sudden thought, or a mere outward act, or an offence committed under the influence of strong temptation, but that it was the result of an entire corruption of his nature,—of a deep depravity of heart, running back to the very commencement of his being. The idea is, that he could not have committed this offence unless he had been thoroughly corrupt, and always corrupt. The sin was as heinous and aggravated *as if* in his very conception and birth there had been nothing but depravity. He looked at his sin, and he looked back to his own origin, and he inferred that the one demonstrated that in the other there was no good thing, no tendency to goodness, no germ of goodness, but that there was evil, and only evil;—as when one looks at a tree, and sees that it bears sour or poisonous fruit, he infers that it is in the very nature of the tree, and that there is nothing else in the tree, from its origin, but a tendency to produce just such fruit. Of course, the idea here is not to cast reflections on the character of his mother, or to refer to her feelings in regard to his conception and birth, but the design is to express his deep sense of his own depravity; a depravity so deep as to demonstrate that it must have had its origin in the very beginning of his existence. The word rendered *I was shapen*—חוֹלָלְתִּי, *hholalti*—is from a word—חוּל, *hhool*—which means properly, *to turn around, to twist, to whirl;* and then it comes to mean *to twist oneself with pain, to writhe;* and then it is used especially with reference to the pains of childbirth. Isa. xiii. 8; xxiii. 4; xxvi. 18; lxvi. 7, 8; Mic. iv. 10. That is the meaning here. The idea is simply that he was *born* in iniquity; or that he was a sinner when he was born; or that his sin could be traced back to his very birth—as one might say that he was born with a love of music, or with a love of nature, or with a sanguine, a phlegmatic, or a melancholy temperament. There is not in the Hebrew word any idea corresponding to the word "*shapen,*" as if he had been *formed* or *moulded* in that manner by Divine power; but the entire meaning of the word is exhausted by saying that his sin could be traced back to his *very birth;* that it was so deep and aggravated, that it could be accounted for—or that he could express his sense of it—in no other way, than by saying that he was *born a sinner.* How that occurred, or how it was connected with the first apostacy in Adam, or how the fact that he was thus born could be vindicated, is not intimated, nor is it alluded to. There is no statement that the sin of another was *imputed* to him; or that he was *responsible* for the sin of Adam; or that he was guilty *on account of* Adam's sin; for on these points the

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge [c] me with hyssop, and

[c] Lev. xiv. 4—9; Num. xix. 18; Heb. ix. 19.

psalmist makes no assertion. It is worthy of remark, further, that the psalmist did not endeavour to *excuse* his guilt on the ground that he was "*born*" in iniquity; nor did he allude to that fact with any purpose of *exculpating* himself. The fact that he was thus born only deepened his sense of his own guilt, or showed the enormity of the offence which was the regular result or outbreak of that early depravity. The points, therefore, which are established by this expression of the psalmist, so far as the language is designed to illustrate how human nature is conceived, are (1) that men are born with a propensity to sin; and (2) that this fact does not excuse us in sin, but rather tends to aggravate and deepen our guilt. The language goes no farther than this in regard to the question of original sin or native depravity. The Septuagint accords with this interpretation—*ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἐν ἀνομίαις συνελήφθην.* So the Vulgate: in iniquitatibus conceptus sum. ¶ *And in sin did my mother conceive me.* Marg., as in Heb., *warm me.* This language simply traces his sin back to the time when he began to exist. The previous expression traced it to *his birth;* this expression goes back to the very beginning of *life;* when there were the first indications of life. The idea is, "as soon as I began to exist I was a sinner; or, I had then a propensity to sin—a propensity, the sad proof and result of which is that enormous act of guilt which I have committed."

6. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* The word rendered *desirest,* means to have pleasure in; to delight in; and the idea is that this only is agreeable to God, or this only accords with his own nature. The word rendered *inward parts,* means properly the reins, and is usually employed to denote the seat of the mind, the feelings, the intellect. Comp. Notes on Job xxxviii. 36. The allusion is to the *soul;* and the idea is, that God could be satisfied with nothing *but* purity in the soul. The *connexion* is this: David was deeply conscious of his own pollution; his deep, early, native depravity. This, in his own mind, he contrasted strongly with the nature of God, and with what God must require, and be pleased with. He *felt* that God could not approve of or love such a heart as his, so vile, so polluted, so corrupt; and he felt that it was necessary that he should have a pure heart in order to meet with the favour of a God so holy. But how was that to be obtained? His mind at once adverted to the fact that it could come only from God; and hence the psalm now turns from confession to prayer. The psalmist pleads earnestly (vers. 7–10) that God *would* thus cleanse and purify his soul. ¶ *And in the hidden* part. In the secret part; the heart; the depths of the soul. The cleansing was to begin in that which was hidden from the eye of man; in the soul itself. Wisdom, heavenly, saving wisdom, was to have its seat there; the cleansing needed was not any mere outward purification, it was the purification of the soul itself. ¶ *Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Thou only canst enable me to understand what is truly wise. This wisdom, this cleansing, this knowledge of the way in which a guilty man can be restored to favour, can be imparted only by thee; and *thou wilt do it.* There is here, therefore, at the same time a recognition of the truth that this *must* come from God, and an act of faith, or a strong assurance that he *would* impart this.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* On the word hyssop, see Notes on John xix. 29; Heb. ix. 19. The plant or herb was much used by the Hebrews in their sacred

I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be [d] whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

9 Hide [e] thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create [f] in me a clean heart,

[d] Isa, i. 18. [e] Jer. xvi. 17. [f] Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

purifications and sprinklings: Exod. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 4, 6, 49, 51; 1 Kings iv. 33. Under this name the Hebrews seem to have comprised not only the common *hyssop* of the shops, but also other aromatic plants, as mint, wild marjoram, etc.—Gesenius, *Lex.* The idea of the psalmist here evidently is not that the mere sprinkling with hyssop would make him clean; but he prays for that cleansing of which the sprinkling with hyssop was an emblem, or which was designed to be represented by that. The whole structure of the psalm implies that he was seeking an *internal* change, and that he did not depend on any mere outward ordinance or rite. The word rendered "purge" is from the word חָטָא, *hhata*—which means *to sin.* In the Piel form it means to bear the blame (or *loss*) for anything; and then to *atone for, to make atonement, to expiate:* Gen. xxxi. 39; Lev. vi. 26; Num. xix. 19. Here it conveys the notion of cleansing from sin by a sacred rite, or by that which was signified *by* a sacred rite. The idea was that the sin was to be removed or taken away, so that he might be free from it, or that *that* might be accomplished which was represented by the sprinkling with hyssop, and that the soul might be made pure. Luther has rendered it with great force — Entsündige mich mit Ysop—"Unsin me with hyssop." ¶ *Wash me.* That is, cleanse me. Sin is represented as *defiling*, and the idea of *washing* it away is often employed in the Scriptures. See Notes on Isa. i. 16. ¶ *And I shall be whiter than snow.* See Notes on Isa. i. 18. The prayer is, that he might be made *entirely* clean; that there might be no remaining pollution in his soul.

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* That is, the voice of forgiveness, causing joy and rejoicing. What he wished to hear was the kind voice of God in pronouncing his pardon; not the voice of anger and condemnation. God now condemned him. The law condemned him. His own conscience condemned him. The result was anguish and sorrow. The burden was great and overpowering, —such as to crush him; to break all his "bones." He longed to hear the sweet voice of forgiveness, by which he might have peace, and by which his soul might be made to rejoice. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. ¶ That *the bones* which *thou hast broken may rejoice.* That is, which have been crushed or broken by the weight of sin. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxii. 3. See also Ps. vi. 2; xxii. 14; xxxi. 10; xxxviii. 3. The word "*rejoice*" means here, be free from suffering; the prayer is that the burden which had crushed him might be removed.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins.* That is, Do not look on them; avert thy face from them; do not regard them. Comp. Notes on Ps. xiii. 1. ¶ *And blot out all mine iniquities.* Take them entirely away. Let the account be erased, cancelled, destroyed. See Notes on ver. 1.

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* The word rendered *create,*—בָּרָא, *bera*—is a word which is properly employed to denote an act of *creation;* that is, of causing something to exist where there was nothing before. It is the word which is used in Gen. i. 1,—"In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth,"—and which is commonly used to express the act of creation. It is used *here* evidently in the sense of causing that to exist which did not exist before; and there is clearly a

O God; and renew a [1]right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not [g] thy holy Spirit from me.

[1] Or, *constant.* [g] Luke xi. 13.

recognition of the Divine *power*, or a feeling on the part of David that this could be done by God alone. The idea is, however, not that a new *substance* might be brought into being to which the name "a clean heart" might be given, but that he might *have* a clean heart; that his heart might be made pure; that his affections and feelings might be made right; that he might have what he was conscious that he did *not* now possess,—a clean or a pure heart. This, he felt, could be produced only by the power of God; and the passage, therefore, proves that it is a doctrine of the Old Testament, as it is of the New, that the human heart is changed only by a Divine agency. ¶ *And renew a right spirit within me.* Marg., *a constant spirit.* The Hebrew word — נָכוֹן, *nachon* — means properly, that which is *erect*, or that which is made to stand up, or which is firm or established. It is used to denote (*a*) that which is upright, right, proper: Ex. viii. 26; Job xlii. 8; Ps. v. 9; (*b*) that which is right, true, sincere, Ps. lxxviii. 37; (*c*) that which is firm, constant, fixed. This would seem to be the meaning here. He prays for a heart that would be firm in the purposes of virtue; that would not yield to temptation; that would carry out holy resolutions; that would be stedfast in the service of God. The word *renew* here means to be or to make new; to produce something new. It is also used in the sense of making anew, as applied to buildings or cities in the sense of *rebuilding* or *repairing* them: Isa. lxi. 4; 2 Chron. xv. 8; xxiv. 4. The word here would naturally convey the idea that there had been formerly a right and proper spirit in him, which he prayed might now be restored. The language is that of one who had done right formerly, but who had fallen into sin, and who desired that he might be brought back into his former condition.

11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.* That is, Do not reject me, or cast me off entirely; do not abandon me; do not leave me in my sin and sorrow. The language is derived from the idea that true happiness is to be found in the *presence* of God, and that to be exiled from him is misery. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvi. 11; xxxi. 20. See also Ps. cxl. 13. ¶ *And take not thy holy Spirit from me.* It is not certain that David understood by the phrase "thy Holy Spirit" precisely what is now denoted by it as referring to the third person of the Trinity. The language, as used by him, would denote some influence coming from God producing holiness, *as if* God breathed his own spirit, or his own self, into the soul. The language, however, is appropriate to be used in the higher and more definite sense in which it is now employed, as denoting that sacred Spirit—the Holy Ghost—by whom the heart is renewed, and by whom comfort is imparted to the soul. It is not necessary to suppose that the inspired writers of the Old Testament had a full and complete comprehension of the meaning of the words which they employed, or that they appreciated all that their words might properly convey, or the fulness of signification in which they might be properly used in the times of the Gospel. Comp. Notes on 1 Pet. i. 10–12. The language here used by David—"*take not*"—implies that he had been formerly in possession of that which he now sought. There was still in his heart that which might be regarded as the work of the Spirit of God; and he earnestly prayed that *that* might not be wholly taken away on account of his sin, or that he might not be entirely abandoned to despair.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free [h] Spirit:

13 *Then* [i] will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from [1] blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of

[h] 2 Cor. iii. 17.

[i] Zech. iii. 1—8. [1] *bloods.*

12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* Literally, "Cause the joy of thy salvation to return." This implies that he had formerly known what was the happiness of being a friend of God, and of having a hope of salvation. That joy had been taken from him by his sin. He had lost his peace of mind. His soul was sad and cheerless. Sin always produces this effect. The only way to enjoy religion is to do that which is right; the only way to secure the favour of God is to obey his commands; the only way in which we can have comforting evidence that we are his children is by doing that which shall be pleasing to him: 1 John ii. 29; iii. 7, 10. The path of sin is a dark path, and in that path neither hope nor comfort can be found. ¶ *And uphold me* with thy *free spirit.* That is, Sustain me; keep me from falling. The words "*with thy*" are not in the original, and there is nothing there to indicate that by the word "spirit" the psalmist refers to the Spirit of God, though it should be observed that there is nothing *against* such a supposition. The word rendered "free"—נָדִיב *nadib*—means properly *willing, voluntary, ready, prompt;* 1 Chron. xxviii. 21; Ex. xxxv. 5. Then the word means liberal, generous, noble-minded; Isa. xxxii. 5, 8; Prov. xvii. 7, 26. It would seem here to mean "a *willing* spirit," referring to David's own mind or spirit; and the prayer is, that God would uphold or sustain him *in* a *willing* spirit or state of mind; that is, a state of mind in which he would be willing and ready to obey all the commands of God, and to serve him faithfully. What he prayed for was grace and strength that he might be kept in a state of mind which would be constant and firm (ver. 10), and a state in which he would always be found *willing* and *ready* to keep the commandments of God. It is a proper object of prayer by all that they may be always *kept* in a state of mind in which they will be *willing* to do all that God requires of them, and to bear all that may be laid on them.

13. Then *will I teach transgressors thy ways.* As an expression of gratitude, and as the result of his own painful experience. He would show them, from that experience, the evil and the bitterness of sin in itself; he would show them with what dreadful consequences sin must always be followed; he would show them the nature of true repentance; he would show them what was required in order that sin might be forgiven; he would encourage them to come to that God who had forgiven him. So the Saviour charged Peter, from his own bitter experience in having fallen under the power of temptation, to strengthen and encourage those who were struggling with the depravity of their own hearts, and who were in danger of falling: "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii. 32. ¶ *And sinners shall be converted unto thee.* They would see from his case the evil of transgression; they would learn from his example that mercy might be found; they would be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come. The best preparation for success in winning souls to God, and turning them from the error of their ways, is a deep personal experience of the guilt and the danger of sin, and of the great mercy of God in its forgiveness. No man can hope to be successful who has not experienced this in his own soul; no one who has, will labour wholly in vain in such a work.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guilti-*

my salvation; *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

16 For [l] thou desirest not sacrifice, [1] else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

k Ps. lxxi. 23, 24.

l Hos. vi. 6; Mic. vi. 7, 8; Heb. x. 4—10.

[1] Or, *that I should.*

ness, O God. Marg., as in Heb., *bloods.* So it is rendered by the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it *blood-guilt.* De Wette, *from blood.* Comp. Isa. iv. 4. The *plural* form—*bloods*—is used probably to mark *intensity*, or to denote *great* guilt. The allusion is to the guilt of shedding blood, or taking life (comp. Gen. ix. 5, 6), and the reference is undoubtedly to his guilt in causing Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, to be slain. 2 Sam. xi. 14–17. It was this which weighed upon his conscience, and filled him with alarm. The guilt of this he prayed might be taken away, that he might have peace. The *fact* of the shedding of that blood could never be changed; the real *criminality* of that fact would always remain the same; the *crime* itself could never be declared to be innocence; his own personal *ill desert* for having caused the shedding of that blood would always remain; but the sin might be pardoned, and his soul could thus find peace. The penalty might be remitted, and, though guilty, he might be assured of the Divine favour. He could not, indeed, repair the evil to Uriah—for *he* had gone beyond the power of David for good or for evil—but he could do much to express his sense of the wrong; he could do much to save others from a similar course; he could do much to benefit society by keeping others from the like guilt. He could not, indeed, recall Uriah from the grave, and repair the evil which he had done to *him*, but he might save others from such a crime, and thus preserve many a useful life from the effects of unrestrained guilty passions. We cannot, indeed, by penitence recall those whom we have murdered; we cannot restore purity to those whom we have seduced; we cannot restore faith to the young man whom we may have made a sceptic; but we may do much to restrain others from sin, and much to benefit the world even when we have been guilty of wrongs that cannot be repaired. ¶ *Thou God of my salvation.* On whom I am dependent for salvation; who art alone the source of salvation to me. ¶ And *my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxv. 28.

15. *O Lord, open thou my lips.* That is, by taking away my guilt; by giving me evidence that my sins are forgiven; by taking this burden from me, and filling my heart with the joy of pardon. The original word is in the future tense, but the meaning is well expressed in our common translation. There was, in fact, at the same time a confident expectation that God *would* thus open his lips, and a desire that he *should* do it. ¶ *And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.* Or, I will praise thee. Praise is the natural expression of the feelings when the sense of sin is removed.

16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice,* etc. On the words rendered in this verse *sacrifice* and *burnt-offering*, see Notes on Isa. i. 11. On the main sentiment here expressed—that God did not *desire* such sacrifices—see Notes on Ps. xl. 6—8. The idea here is, that any mere external offering, however precious or costly it might be, was not what God required in such cases. He demanded the expression of deep and sincere repentance; the sacrifices of a contrite heart and of a broken spirit: ver. 17. No offering without this could be acceptable; nothing without this could secure pardon. In mere outward sacrifices,—in bloody offerings themselves, unaccompanied with the expression of

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken [m] and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

m Isa. lxvi. 2.

genuine penitence, God could have no pleasure. This is one of the numerous passages in the Old Testament which show that the external offerings of the law were valueless unless accompanied by the religion of the heart; or that the Jewish religion, much as it abounded in forms, yet required the offerings of pure hearts in order that man might be acceptable to God. Under all dispensations the real nature of religion is the same. Comp. Notes on Heb. ix. 9, 10. The phrase "else would I give it,"—in the margin, "that I should give it,"—expresses a willingness to make such an offering, if it was required, while, at the same time, there is the implied statement that it would be valueless without the heart.

17. *The sacrifices of God.* The sacrifices which God desires and approves; the sacrifices without which no other offering would be acceptable. David felt that that which he here specified was what was demanded in his case. He had grievously sinned; and the blood of animals offered in sacrifice could not put away his sin, nor could anything remove it unless the heart were itself penitent and contrite. The same thing is true now. Though a most perfect sacrifice, every way acceptable to God, has been made for human guilt by the Redeemer, yet it is as true as it was under the old dispensation in regard to the sacrifices there required, that even that will not avail for us unless we are truly penitent; unless we come before God with a contrite and humble heart. ¶ Are *a broken spirit.* A mind broken or crushed under the weight of conscious guilt. The idea is that of a burden laid on the soul until it is crushed and subdued. ¶ *A broken and a contrite heart.* The word rendered *contrite* means to be broken or crushed, as when the bones are broken, Ps. xliv. 19; li. 8; and then it is applied to the mind or heart as that which is crushed or broken by the weight of guilt. The word does not differ materially from the term *broken.* The two together constitute *intensity* of expression. ¶ *Thou wilt not despise.* Thou wilt not treat with contempt or disregard. That is, God would look upon them with favour, and to such a heart he would grant his blessing. See Notes on Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2.

18. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.* From himself—his deep sorrow, his conscious guilt, his earnest prayer for pardon and salvation—the psalmist turns to Zion, to the city of God, to the people of the Lord. These, after all, lay nearer to his heart than his own personal salvation; and to these his thoughts naturally turned even in connexion with his own deep distress. Such a prayer as is here offered he would also be more naturally led to offer from the remembrance of the dishonour which he had brought on the cause of religion, and it was natural for him to pray that his own misconduct might not have the effect of hindering the cause of God in the world. The psalms often take this turn. Where they commence with a personal reference to the author himself, the thoughts often terminate in a reference to Zion, and to the promotion of the cause of religion in the world. ¶ *Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.* It is this expression on which De Wette, Doederlein, and Rosenmüller rely in proof that this psalm, or this portion of it, was composed at a later period than the time of David, and that it must have been written in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins. See the introduction to the psalm. But, as was remarked there, it is not necessary to adopt this supposition. There are two other solutions of the diffi-

19 Then shalt thou [n] be pleased with the [o] sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

[n] Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

[o] Ps. iv. 5; Rom. xiii. 1.

culty, either of which would meet all that is implied in the language. (*a*) One is, that the walls of Jerusalem, which David had undertaken to build, were not as yet complete, or that the public works commenced by him for the protection of the city had not been finished at the time of the fatal affair of Uriah. There is nothing in the history which forbids this supposition, and the *language* is such as would be used by David on the occasion, if he had been actually engaged in completing the walls of the city, and rendering it impregnable, and if his heart was intensely fixed on the completion of the work. (*b*) The other supposition is, that this is figurative language —a prayer that God would favour and bless his people *as if* the city was to be protected by walls, and thus rendered safe from an attack by the enemy. Such language is, in fact, often used in cases where it could not be pretended that it was designed to be literal. See Jude 20; Rom. xv. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 12; Gal. ii. 18; Eph. ii. 22; Col. ii. 7.

19. *Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness.* "Then," that is, when God should have thus showed favour to Zion; when he should have poured out his blessing on Jerusalem; when religion should prosper and prevail; when there should be an increase of the pure worship of God. In such offerings as would *then* be made,—in sacrifices presented not in mere form, but with sincerity, humility, and penitence,—in the outward offering of blood presented with a corresponding sincerity of feeling, and with true contrition, and a proper acknowledgment of the guilt designed to be represented by the shedding of blood in sacrifice,—God would be pleased, and would approve the worship thus rendered to him. Sacrifice would then be acceptable, for it would not be presented as a mere form, but would be *so* offered, that it might be called a "sacrifice *of righteousness*"—a sacrifice offered with a right spirit; in a manner which God would deem right. ¶ *With burnt-offering.* See Notes on Isa. i. 11. ¶ *And whole burnt-offering.* The word here means that which is *wholly* consumed, no part of which was reserved to be eaten by the priests, as was the case in many of the sacrifices. See Deut. xxxiii. 10. Comp. Lev. vi. 9; i. 3—17. ¶ *Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.* That is, then shall bullocks be offered. The meaning is, that all the offerings prescribed in the law would then be brought, and that those sacrifices would be made with a right spirit—a spirit of true devotion—the offering of the heart accompanying the outward form. In other words, there would be manifested the spirit of humble worship; of pure religion.

PSALM LII.

This psalm purports to be "a psalm of David," and there is no reason to doubt that he was the author. The occasion on which it was composed is stated in the title. The correctness of this title has been called in question by De Wette and Rüdinger, on the ground that the contents of the psalm do not seem to them to be so well fitted to that occasion as to the times of Absalom or Ahithophel. There does not, however, appear to be any just reason for doubting the correctness of the title, as all the circumstances referred to in the psalm are susceptible of application to the act of Doeg the Edomite, on the occasion referred to, viz., that mentioned in 1 Sam. xxii. 9, *et seq.* David had fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob, 1 Sam. xxi. 1. By Ahimelech he had been supplied with bread, and furnished with the sword with which he himself had slain Goliath. On this occasion, an Edomite was present, named Doeg,

whose character was, from some cause well known; and David felt that he would not hesitate to betray any one, or do any act of wickedness or meanness, if it would subserve his own purposes (1 Sam. xxii. 22). Apprehensive of danger, therefore, even in the presence and under the protection of Ahimelech, and supposing that his place of retreat could not be concealed from Saul, he fled to Achish, king of Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10), until in the fear of danger there, he feigned madness, and was driven away as a madman (1 Sam. xxi. 14, 15). He found refuge for a time in the cave of Adullam, where he supposed he would be safe, 1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2. From that cave he went to Mizpeh, in Moab (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4), and thence, at the suggestion of the prophet Gad, he went into the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5.

At this time, Doeg the Edomite, in order to secure the favour of Saul, and to show that there was one at least who was friendly to him, and was willing to deliver up to punishment those who had encouraged David in his rebellion, informed Saul of the fact that David had been seen with Ahimelech at Nob, and that Ahimelech had given him food and the sword of Goliath the Philistine. The result was, that Ahimelech and the priests who were with him were summoned before Saul; that they were accused by him of the crime; that Saul commanded those who were around him to fall on Ahimelech and the priests and to put them to death; and when they all hesitated, Doeg himself fell upon them and executed the barbarous order. Eighty-five priests thus perished by the sword, and the city of Nob was destroyed, 1 Sam. xxii. 9-19. It was the conduct of Doeg in this matter that is the subject of this psalm. Doeg is called "the Edomite." He was probably a native of Idumea, who had connected himself with Saul, and who hoped to secure his especial favour by thus informing him of those who were in league with his enemy David. Some have supposed that he was a native-born Jew, and that he is called an Edomite because he may have had his residence in Idumea; but the more obvious supposition is that he was a native of that land. On Idumea, see Notes on Isa. xi. 14; xxxiv. 5, 6; lxiii. 1.

On the phrase in the title, "*To the chief Musician*," see Notes on the introd. to Ps. iv. The fact that it is thus addressed to the overseer of the public music shows that, though it originally had a private reference, and was designed to record an event which occurred in the life of David, it yet had so much of public interest, and contained truth of so general a nature, that it might properly be employed in the public devotions of the sanctuary.

On the word "*Maschil*," see introd. to Ps. xxxii. The psalm is divided, in the original, apparently for musical purposes, or to adapt it in some way to the music of the sanctuary, into three parts, which are indicated by the word *Selah*, at the close of verses 3 and 5. These, however, have no reference to the sense, or to the natural divisions of the psalm.

As respects the sense or the contents of the psalm, it is divided into three parts, which are *not* indicated by this musical mark.

I. The first refers to the character of the calumniator and informer, vers. 1-4. He was a man who was confident in himself, and who did not regard the goodness of God, ver. 1; a man whose tongue devised mischiefs like a sharp razor, ver. 2; a man who loved evil more than good, and a lie more than the truth, ver. 3; and a man who loved to utter words that would destroy the character and the happiness of others, ver. 4.

II. The judgment, or punishment that would come upon such a man, vers. 5-7. (*a*) God would destroy and root him out of the land, ver. 5; (*b*) the righteous would see this, and would triumph over him as one who was brought to a proper end,—the proper end of one who did not make God his strength; who trusted in his riches; who strengthened himself in the purposes of wickedness, vers. 6, 7.

III. The security—the preservation—the joy, of the author of the psalm, vers. 8, 9. The aim—the purpose—of the informer referred to in the psalm, namely Doeg, had been really to disclose the place of David's retreat, and to have him delivered into the hands of Saul. This he hoped to accomplish through Ahimelech the priest. He supposed, evidently, that when Saul was informed that David had been with *him*, Ahimelech would be brought before Saul and required to give information as to the place where David might be found, and that thus David would be delivered into the hands of Saul. But in this he had been disappointed. David had fled, and was secure.

Ahimelech was summoned to meet Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 11), and with him were summoned also all "his father's house, the priests that were in Nob." In reply to the charge that he had conspired against Saul; that he had befriended David; that he had "given him," in modern language, "aid and comfort;" that he had assisted him so that he could "rise against Saul," and that he had so befriended him that he could "lie in wait for him" at that time,—he boldly declared his conviction that Saul had not a more faithful subject in his realm than David was;—"And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?" There Ahimelech stood—an example of a bold, firm, independent, honourable, honest man. He maintained the innocence of David, as well as his own. He sought no favour by joining in the clamour against David. He did not seek to avert the blow which he could not but see was impending over himself, by any mean compliance with the prejudices of the king. He did nothing to flatter the offended monarch, or to gratify him in his purpose to arrest David, the fugitive. He made no offer to disclose to him the place of his concealment. Any one of these things—any act in the *line* of that which Doeg had performed—might have saved his life. That he knew the place of David's retreat, is apparent from a circumstance incidentally referred to in the ultimate account of the affair; for, after Ahimelech had been put to death, it is said that one of his sons—Abiathar—fled at once to David (1 Sam. xxii. 20, 21), and disclosed to him the dreadful manner of his father's death; thus showing that the knowledge of the place of his retreat was in the possession of the family, and could easily have been disclosed to Saul, and yet it was not done. Neither Ahimelech, nor any one of his family, even intimated to Saul that they knew where David then was, and that they could put him in possession of the means of securing him. That the fact that they *did* not and *would* not betray the place of his retreat was one cause of the wrath of Saul, is apparent from the reason assigned why the "footmen" were commanded to put them to death;—"And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, *and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me*," 1 Sam. xxii. 17.

It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if there had been an offer of furnishing the information; if there had been a tender of their services in the case; if there had been evinced a spirit of ready compliance with the prejudices and passions of Saul; if there had been among them the same spirit of mean sycophancy which characterised Doeg,—Ahimelech and the whole family would have been safe. But no such thing was done; no such offer was made; no such spirit was evinced. There they stood—noble-minded men—father, son, all the family, true to honour, to virtue, to religion; true to God, to Saul, to David, and to themselves. They hid the secret in their own bosoms; they neither proffered nor submitted to any mean or dishonourable compliances that they might save their lives. There was, on the one hand, Doeg, *the "mighty" man*, but *the mean informer;* on the other, a noble-minded man standing up in the conscious integrity of what he had done, and maintaining it even at the hazard of life.

The result is well known, and was that which, so far as the fate of Ahimelech was concerned, could easily have been anticipated. Saul, maddened against David, was now equally infuriated against the honest man who had befriended him. He commanded him to be put to death at once. And here, in this remarkable transaction, where so much of meaness and honour, of fidelity and falsehood, of integrity and corruption, of soberness and passion, come so near together, we have another striking instance of firmness and virtue. Saul commanded the "footmen," (marg. the *runners*,) who were about him, to "turn and slay" Ahimelech and his sons. Yet the "footmen" declined to do the bloody work. Noble men, themselves, they saw here an instance of true nobleness of character and of deed in the priests of the Lord; and they refused, even at the peril of the wrath of Saul, to execute an unrighteous sentence on men so noble, so honourable, so true. There *was* one, however, that would do it. There stood the mean, the sycophantic, the base man, Doeg, who had '*informed*' against the priests, and he was ready to do the work. The command was given, and he consummated the work of betrayal and of meanness, by putting at once to the sword, fourscore and five priests of the Lord, and by carrying

PSALM LII.

To the chief Musician, Maschil. *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg *p* the Edomite came and told *q* Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

p 1 Sam. xxi. 7; xxii. 9. *q* Ezek. xxii. 9.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the *r* goodness of God *endureth* continually.

2 Thy tongue deviseth mis-

r Ps. cxxxvi. 1, 2.

desolation and death through the city of their habitation, smiting "with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep;" 1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19.

In the mean time David was safe, and it is this fact which he celebrates when he says in this psalm, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God," ver. 8; and it is for this that he gives praise, ver. 9.

The psalm refers, therefore, to the character and the conduct of an "*informer*,"—one of the most odious characters among men. In a book claiming to be a revelation from God, as the Bible does—a book designed for all men, and intended to be adapted to all ages, and in a world where such men would be found in all lands and times, it was proper that the character of such should be at least once held up in its true light, that men may see what it really is. Any bad man may make himself more odious by becoming an "informer;" any good man may suffer, as David did, from the acts of such an one; and hence the case in the psalm may suggest useful lessons in every age of the world.

1. *Why boastest thou thyself in mischief?* Why dost thou *exult* in that which is wrong? Why dost thou find pleasure in evil rather than in good? Why dost thou seek to triumph in the injury done to others? The reference is to one who prided himself on schemes and projects which tended to injure others; or who congratulated himself on the success which attended his efforts to wrong other men. ¶ *O mighty man.* De Wette and Luther render this, *tyrant.* The original word would be properly applied to one of rank or distinction; a man of *power*—power derived either from office, from talent, or from wealth. It is a word which is often applied to a hero or warrior: Isa. iii. 2; Ezek. xxxix. 20; 2 Sam. xvii. 10; Ps. xxxiii. 16; cxx. 4; cxxvii. 4; Dan. xi. 3; Gen. vi. 4; Jer. li. 30. So far as the *word* is concerned, it might be applied either to Saul or to any other warrior or man of rank; and Professor Alexander supposes that it refers to Saul himself. The connexion, however, seems to require us to understand it of Doeg, and not of Saul, This appears to be clear (*a*) from the general character here given to the person referred to, a character not particularly applicable to Saul, but applicable to an informer like Doeg (vers. 2—4); and (*b*) from the fact that he derived his power, not from his rank and office, as Saul did, but mainly from his wealth (ver. 7). This would seem to imply that some other was referred to than Saul. ¶ *The goodness of God* endureth *continually.* Literally, *all the day.* That is, the wicked man could not hope to prevent the exercise of the Divine goodness towards him whom he persecuted, and whom he sought to injure. David means to say that the goodness of God was so great and so constant, that he would protect his true friends from such machinations; or that it was so unceasing and watchful, that the informer and accuser could not hope to find an interval of time when God would intermit his care, and when, therefore, he might hope for success. Against the goodness of God, the devices of a wicked man to injure the righteous could not ultimately prevail.

2. *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs.* The word rendered *mischiefs* means (*a*) desire, cupidity: Prov. x. 3; then (*b*) fall, ruin, destruction, wickedness: Ps. v. 9; xxxviii. 12. The meaning here is, that he made use of his tongue to ruin others. Comp. Ps. l. 19. The particular thing referred to here is the fact that Doeg

chiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3 Thou lovest evil more than good, *and* lying [s] rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

4 Thou lovest all devouring words, [1] O *thou* deceitful tongue.

5 God [t] shall likewise [2] destroy thee for ever: he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy*

s Jer. ix. 4, 5. [1] Or, and *the*.

t Prov. xix. 5, 9. [2] *beat thee down*.

sought the ruin of others by giving *information* in regard to them. He *informed* Saul of what Ahimelech had done; he *informed* him where David had been, thus giving him, also, information in what way he might be found and apprehended. All this was *designed* to bring ruin upon David and his followers. It *actually* brought ruin on Ahimelech and those associated with him, 1 Sam. xxii. 17—19. ¶ *Like a sharp razor.* See Notes on Isa. vii. 20. His slanders were like a sharp knife with which one stabs another. So we say of a slanderer that he "*stabs*" another in the dark. ¶ *Working deceitfully.* Literally, *making deceit.* That is, it was by deceit that he accomplished his purpose. There was no open and fair dealing in what he did.

3. *Thou lovest evil more than good.* Thou dost prefer to do injury to others, rather than to do them good. In the case referred to, instead of aiding the innocent, the persecuted, and the wronged, he had attempted to reveal the place where he might be found, and where an enraged enemy might have an opportunity of wreaking his vengeance upon him. ¶ And *lying rather than to speak righteousness.* He preferred a lie to the truth; and, when he supposed that his own interest would be subserved by it, he preferred a falsehood that would promote that interest, rather than a simple statement of the truth. The *lying* in this case was that which was *implied* in his being desirous of giving up David, or betraying him to Saul,—*as if* David was a bad man, and *as if* the suspicions of Saul were well-founded. He preferred to give his countenance to a falsehood in regard to him, rather than to state the exact truth in reference to his character. His conduct in this was strongly in contrast with that of Ahimelech, who, when arraigned before Saul, declared his belief that David was innocent; his firm conviction that David was true and loyal. *For* that fidelity he lost his life, 1 Sam. xxii. 14. Doeg was willing to lend countenance to the suspicions of Saul, and practically to represent David as a traitor to the king. The word *Selah* here is doubtless a mere musical pause. See Notes on Ps. iii. 2. It determines nothing in regard to the sense of the passage.

4. *Thou lovest all devouring words.* All words that tend to devour or *swallow up* reputation and happiness. Luther, "Thou speakest gladly all things [anything] that will serve to destruction." Anything, everything, that will serve to ruin men. The word rendered "devouring"—בַּלַּע, *bela*—occurs only here and in Jer. li. 44, though the verb from which it is derived occurs frequently: Isa. xxviii. 4; Exod. vii. 12; Jonah ii. 1 [i. 17]; Gen. xli. 7, 24, *et al.* The verb means to swallow; and then, to consume or destroy. ¶ *O* thou *deceitful tongue.* Marg., *and the deceitful tongue.* The sense is best expressed in the text. It is an address *to* the tongue as loving deceit or fraud.

5. *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.* Marg., *beat thee down.* The Hebrew word means *to tear, to break down, to destroy:* Lev. xiv. 45; Judges vi. 30. The reference here is not to the *tongue* alluded to in the previous verses, but to Doeg himself. The language in the verse is intensive and emphatic. The main idea is presented in a variety of forms, all designed to denote utter and absolute destruction—a complete and entire sweeping away, so that nothing should be left. The word *here* used would

dwelling-place, and [u] root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

[u] Prov. ii. 22.

7 Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted [v] in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.

[v] 1 Tim. vi. 17. [1] Or, *substance.*

suggest the idea of *pulling down*—as a house, a fence, a wall; that is, the idea of completely *demolishing* it; and the meaning is, that destruction would come upon the informer and slanderer *like* the destruction which comes upon a house, or wall, or fence, when it is entirely pulled down. ¶ *He shall take thee away.* An expression indicating in another form that he would be certainly destroyed. The verb here used—חָתָה, *khatha*—is elsewhere used only in the sense of taking up and carrying fire or coals: Isa. xxx. 14; Prov. vi. 27; xxv. 22. The idea here *may* be that he would be seized and carried away with haste, as when one takes up fire or coals, he does it as rapidly as possible, lest he should be burned. ¶ *And shall pluck thee out of* thy *dwelling-place.* Literally, "out of the *tent.*" The reference is to his abode. The allusion here in the verb that is used—נָסַח, *nasahh*—is to the act of pulling up plants; and the idea is, that he would be plucked up as a plant is torn from its roots. ¶ *And root thee out of the land of the living.* As a tree is torn up from the roots and thus destroyed. He would be no more among the living. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 13. All these phrases are intended to denote that such a man would be utterly destroyed.

6. *The righteous also shall see.* See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 34. ¶ *And fear.* The effect of such a judgment will be to produce reverence in the minds of good men—a solemn sense of the justice of God; to make them tremble at such fearful judgments; and to fear lest they should violate the law, and bring judgment on themselves. ¶ *And shall laugh at him.* Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 4. See also Ps. lviii. 10; lxiv. 9, 10; Prov. i. 26. The idea here is not exultation in the *sufferings* of others, or joy that *calamity* has come upon them, or the gratification of selfish and revengeful feeling that an enemy is deservedly punished; it is that of approbation that punishment has come upon those who deserve it, and joy that wickedness is not allowed to triumph. It is not wrong for us to feel a sense of approbation and joy that the laws are maintained, and that justice is done, even though this does involve suffering, for we know that the guilty deserve it, and it is better that they should suffer than that the righteous should suffer through them. All this may be entirely free from any malignant, or any revengeful feeling. It may even be connected with the deepest pity, and with the purest benevolence towards the sufferers themselves.

7. *Lo,* this is *the man* that *made not God his strength.* That is, the righteous (ver. 6) would say this. They would designate him as a man who had not made God his refuge, but who had trusted in his own resources. The result would be that he would be abandoned by God, and that those things on which he had relied would fail him in the day of calamity. He would be pointed out as an instance of what must occur when a man does not act with a wise reference to the will of God, but, confiding in his own strength and resources, pursues his own plans of iniquity. ¶ *But trusted in the abundance of his riches.* See Notes on Ps. xlix. 6. From this it would seem that Doeg was a rich man, and that, as a general thing, in his life, and in his plans of evil, he felt confident in his wealth. He had that spirit of arrogance and self-confidence which springs from the conscious possession of property where there is

8 But I *am* like *w* a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

w Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12.

9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it:* and I will wait *x* on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

x Lam. iii. 25, 26. *y* Ps. lxxiii. 28.

no fear of God; and into all that he did he carried the sense of his own importance as derived from his riches. In the particular matter referred to in the psalm the meaning is, that he would perform the iniquitous work of giving "information" with the proud and haughty feeling springing from wealth and from self-importance—the feeling that he was a man of consequence, and that whatever such a man might do would be entitled to special attention. ¶ And *strengthened himself in his wickedness.* Marg., *substance.* This is the same word which in ver. 1 is rendered *mischief.* The idea is, that he had a malicious pleasure in doing wrong, or in injuring others, and that by every art, and against all the convictions and remonstrances of his own conscience, he endeavoured to confirm himself *in* this unholy purpose and employment.

8. *But I* am *like a green olive-tree in the house of God.* I am safe and happy, notwithstanding the effort made by my enemy, the informer, to secure my destruction. I have been kept unharmed, like a green and flourishing tree—a tree protected in the very courts of the sanctuary—safe under the care and the eye of God. A green tree is the emblem of prosperity. See Notes on Ps. i. 3; xxxvii. 35; comp. Ps. xcii. 12. The "house of God" here referred to is the tabernacle, considered as the place where God was supposed to reside. See Notes on Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4, 5. The particular allusion here is to the *courts* of the tabernacle. An olive tree would not be cultivated *in* the tabernacle, but it might in the *courts* or *area* which surrounded it. The name "house of God" would be given to the whole area, as it was afterwards to the entire area in which the temple was. A tree thus planted in the very courts of the sanctuary would be regarded as sacred, and would be safe as long as the tabernacle itself was safe, for it would be, as it were, directly under the Divine protection. So David had been, notwithstanding all the efforts of his enemies to destroy him. ¶ *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.* (*a*) I *have* always done it. It has been my constant practice in trouble or danger. (*b*) I *will* always do it. As the result of all my experience, I will still do it; and thus trusting in God, I shall have the consciousness of safety.

9. *I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done* it. Because thou art the source of my safety. The fact that I have been delivered from the designs of Saul, and saved from the efforts of Doeg to betray me, is to be traced wholly to thee. It has been ordered by thy providence that the purposes alike of Doeg and of Saul have been defeated, and I am still safe. ¶ *And I will wait on thy name.* That is, I will wait on *thee;* the name being often put for the person himself: Ps. xx. 1; lxix. 30; Prov. xviii. 10; Isa. lix. 19. The language here used means that he would trust in God, or confide in him. All his expectation and hope would be in him. There are two ideas essentially in the language;—(1) the expression of a sense of *dependence* on God, as if the only ground of trust was in him; (2) a willingness to *await* his interposition at all times; a belief that, however long such an interposition might be delayed, God *would* interfere at the proper time to bring deliverance; and a purpose calmly and patiently to look to him until the time of deliverance should come. Comp. Ps. xxv. 3, 5, 21; xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 7, 9, 34; lxix. 3; Isa. viii. 17; xl. 31. ¶ *For* it is *good before thy saints.* God is good;

and I will confess it before his "saints." His mercy has been so marked, that a public acknowledgment of it is proper; and before his assembled people I will declare what he has done for me. So signal an act of mercy, an interposition so fitted to illustrate the character of God, demands more than a private acknowledgment, and I will render him public praise. The same idea occurs in Ps. xxii. 25; xxxv. 18; cxi. 1; Isa. xxxviii. 20. The general thought is, that for great and special mercies it is proper to render special praise to God before his assembled people. It is not that we are to obtrude our private affairs upon the public eye or the public ear; it is not that mercies shown to us have any particular claim to the attention of our fellow-men, but it is that such interpositions illustrate the character of God, and that they may constitute an argument before the world in favour of his benevolent and merciful character. Among the "saints" there is a common bond of union—a common interest in all that pertains to each other; and when special mercy is shown to any one of the great brotherhood, it is proper that all should join in the thanksgiving, and render praise to God.

The importance of the subject considered in this psalm,—the fact that it is not often referred to in books on moral science, or even in sermons,—and the fact that it involves many points of practical difficulty in the intercourse between man and man in the various relations of life—may justify at the close of an exposition of this psalm a consideration of the general question about the morality of giving "*information*," or, in general, the character of the "*informer*." Such a departure from the usual method adopted in works designed to be expository would not be ordinarily proper, since it would swell such works beyond reasonable dimensions; but perhaps it may be admitted in a single instance.

In what cases is it our duty to give information which may be in our possession about the conduct of others; and in what cases does it become a moral wrong or a crime to do it?

This is a question of much importance in respect to our own conduct, and often of much difficulty in its solution. It may not be possible to answer all the inquiries which might be made on this subject, or to lay down principles of undoubted plainness which would be applicable to every case which might occur, but a few general principles may be suggested.

The question is one which may occur at any time, and in any situation of life,—Is it never right to give such information? Are we never bound to do it? Are there no circumstances in which it is proper that it should be voluntary? Are there any situations in which we are exempt by established customs or laws from giving such information? Are there any in which we are bound, by the obligations of conscience, not to give such information, whatever may be the penalty? Where and when does guilt begin or end in our volunteering to give information of the conduct or the concealments of others?

These questions often come with much perplexity before the mind of an ingenuous schoolboy, who would desire to do right, and who yet has so much honour that he desires to escape the guilt and the reproach of being a "tell-tale." They are questions which occur to a lawyer (or, rather, which *did* occur before the general principle, which I will soon advert to, had been settled by the courts), in regard to the knowledge of which he has been put in possession under the confidential relation of advocate and client. They are questions which may occur to a clergyman, either in respect to the confidential disclosures made at the confessional of the Catholic priest, or in respect to the confidential statements of the true penitent made to a Protestant pastor, in order that spiritual counsel may be obtained to give relief to a burdened conscience. They are questions which it was necessary should be settled in regard to a fugitive from justice, who seeks protection

under the roof of a friend or a stranger. They are questions respecting refugees from oppression in foreign lands—suggesting the inquiry whether they shall be welcomed, or whether there shall be any law by which they shall, on demand, be restored to the dominion of a tyrant. They are questions which the conscience will ask, and does ask, about those who make their escape from slavery, who apply to us for aid in securing their liberty, and who seek an asylum beneath our roof;—questions whether the law of God requires or permits us to render any active assistance in making known the place of their refuge, and returning them to bondage. When, and in what cases, if any, is a man bound to give information in such circumstances as these? It is to be admitted that cases may occur, in regard to these questions, in which there would be great difficulty in determining what are the exact limits of duty, and writers on the subject of morals have not laid down such clear rules as would leave the mind perfectly free from doubt, or be sufficient to guide us on all these points. It will be admitted, also, that some of them are questions of much difficulty, and where instruction would be desirable.

Much may be learned, in regard to the proper estimate of human conduct among men, from the *language* which they employ—language which, in its very structure, often conveys their sentiments from age to age. The ideas of men on many of the subjects of morals, in respect to that which is honourable or dishonourable, right or wrong, manly or mean, became thus *imbedded*—I might almost say *fossilized*—in their modes of speech. Language, in its very structure, thus carries down to future times the sentiments cherished in regard to the morality of actions—as the fossil remains that are beneath the surface of the earth, in the strata of the rocks, bring to us the forms of ancient types of animals, and ferns, and palms, of which there are now no living specimens on the globe. They who have studied Dean Trench's Treatise on "Words" will recollect how this idea is illustrated in that remarkable work; how, without any other information about the views of men in other times, the very *words* which they employed, and which have been transmitted to us, convey to us the estimate which was formed in past ages in regard to the moral quality of an action, as proper or improper—as honourable or dishonourable—as conformed to the noble principles of our nature, or the reverse.

As illustrating the general sentiments of mankind in this respect, I will select *two* words as specimens of many which might be selected, and as words which men have been agreed in applying to some of the acts referred to in the questions of difficulty that I have just mentioned, and which may enable us to do something in determining the morality of an action, so far as those words, in their just application to the subject, indicate the judgment of mankind.

One of these is the word "*meanness*"—a word which a schoolboy would be most *likely* to apply to the act of a tell-tale or an informer, and which we instinctively apply to numerous actions in more advanced periods of life, and which serves to mark the judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct. The *idea* in such a case is not so much the *guilt* or the *criminality* of the act considered as a violation of law, as it is that of being opposed to just notions of *honour*, or indicating a base, low, sordid, grovelling spirit—"lowness of mind, want of dignity and elevation; want of honour." (*Webster.*)

The other word is "*sycophant.*" The Athenians had a law prohibiting the exportation of figs. This law, of course, had a penalty, and it was a matter of importance to the magistrate to ascertain who had been guilty of violating it. It suggested, also, a method of securing the favour of such a magistrate, and perhaps of obtaining a reward, by giving *information* of those who had been guilty of violating

the law. From these two words—the Greek word *fig*, and the Greek word to *show*, or to *discover*, we have derived the word *sycophant;* and this word has come down from the Greeks, and through the long tract of ages intervening between its first use in Athens to the present time, always bearing in every age the original idea imbedded in the word, as the old fossil that is now dug up bears the form of the fern, the leaf, the worm, or the shell that was imbedded there perhaps millions of ages ago. As such a man would be *likely* to be mean, and fawning, and flattering, so the word has come to describe always a parasite; a mean flatterer; a flatterer of princes and great men; and hence it is, and would be applied as one of the words indicating the sense of mankind in regard to a "tale-bearer," or an "informer."

Words like these indicate the general judgment of mankind on such conduct as that referred to in the psalm before us. Of course, to what particular *actions* of the kind they are properly applicable, would be another point; they are referred to here only as indicating the general judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct, and to show how careful men are, in their very language, to express their permanent approbation of that which is *honourable* and *right*, and their detestation of that which is *dishonourable* and *wrong*.

Let us now consider more particularly the subject with respect to *duty*, and to *criminality*. The question is, whether we can find any cases where it is *right*—where it is our *duty* to give such information; or, in what cases, if any, it is right; and in what cases it is malignant, guilty, wrong. The points to be considered are—

(1.) When it is right, or when it may be demanded that we should give information of another; and

(2.) When it becomes guilt.

(1.) When it is right, or when it may be demanded of us.

(*a*) It is to be admitted that there are cases in which the interests of justice demand that men should be *required* to give information of others; or, there are cases where the courts have a right to summon us, to put us upon our oath, and to demand the information which may be in our possession. The courts constantly act on this; and the interests of justice could not be promoted, nor could a cause ever be determined, without exercising this right. If all men were bound in conscience to withhold information simply because they have it in their possession, or because of the mode in which they came in possession of it—or if they withheld it from mere stubbornness and obstinacy—all the departments of justice must stand still, and the officers of justice might be discharged, since it can neither be presumed that *they* would possess all the knowledge necessary to the administration of justice themselves, nor would the law allow them to act on it if they did. The law never presumes that a judge is to decide a case from a knowledge of the facts in his own possession, or simply because *he knows what was done in the case.* The ultimate decision must be made in view of testimony *given*, not of knowledge *possessed.* In most cases, however, there is no difficulty on this point. There is no necessary violation of confidence in giving this information. There have been no improper means used to obtain it. There has been only an observation of that which any other man might have seen. There has been no baseness in *spying* out what was done. There has been no "sycophantic" purpose; there is no voluntariness in betraying what we know; there is no dishonourableness in divulging what *happened* to be known to us. A man may *regret* that he witnessed the act of crime, but he does not blame himself for it; he may feel *pained* that his testimony may consign another man to the gallows, but he does not deem it dishonourable, for he has no mean purpose in it, and the interests of justice demand it.

(*b*) It is an admitted principle that

one employed as counsel in a case—a lawyer—shall *not* be required to give up information which may be in his possession as counsel; information which has been entrusted to him by his client. It is held essential to the interests of justice, that whatever is thus communicated to a professional adviser shall be regarded by the court as strictly confidential, and that the counsel incurs no blame if he does *not* give information on the subject; or, in other words, the true interests of justice do not demand, and the principles of honour will not admit, that he should betray the man who has entrusted his cause to him. How far a man, governed by a good conscience, and by the principles of honour, may undertake a cause which, from the statements of his client in the beginning, he may regard as doubtful, or where in the progress of the case he may become sure that his client is guilty, is a point which does not come under the present inquiry, and which may, in fact, be in some respects a question of difficult solution. It must still, however, even in such a case, be held that he cannot be required to give the information in his possession, and every principle of honour or of right would be understood to be violated, if, abandoning the case, he should become a voluntary "*informer*."*

(*c*) In like manner, it is understood that the law does not require a juryman to give voluntary "information" of what may be within his own knowledge in the case that may be submitted for trial. The extent of his oath and his obligation is that he shall give a verdict according to the testimony submitted under the proper forms of law. He may not *go back* of that, and found his opinion in the verdict on any private knowledge which he may have in his own possession, and which has not, under the proper forms of law, been laid before the court; nor may what he himself may have seen and heard enter at all into his verdict, or influence it in any manner, unless it has been submitted with the other testimony in the case to the court. The verdict is to be based on evidence *given;* not on what he *has seen.* An accused man has a right to demand that *all* that shall bear on the sentence in the case—*all* that shall enter into the verdict—shall be submitted as testimony, under the solemnities of an oath, and with all proper opportunities of cross-examination, and of rebutting it by counter testimony. A juryman may, indeed, be called as a witness in a case. But then he is to be sworn and examined as any other witness, and when he comes to unite with others in making up the verdict, he is to allow to enter into that verdict *only* that which is in possession of all the members of the jury, and he is not to permit *any* knowledge which he may have, which was *not* obtained from him in giving testimony, to influence his own judgment in the case.†

(*d*) There are cases, however, in which things entrusted to one *as* a secret, or in confidence, may be required to be given up. Such cases may occur in a matter of private friendship, or in a case of professional confidence.‡ In the case of a Presbyterian clergyman, it has been held that he was bound to submit a letter to the court which had been addressed to him by the accused as her pastor, and which was supposed to

* 3 Blackstone p. 370, Book iii., ch. 23.

† 3 Blackstone, p. 375, Book iii., ch. 23. See p. 370. Note.

‡ "The confidence which is placed in a counsel or solicitor, must necessarily be inviolable when the use of advocates and legal assistants is admitted. But the purposes of public justice supersede the delicacy of every other species of confidential communication. In the trial of the Duchess of Kingston, it was determined that a friend might be bound to disclose, if necessary, in a court of justice, secrets of the most sacred nature which one sex could repose in another. And that a surgeon was bound to communicate any information whatever, which he was possessed of, in consequence of his professional attendance. And those secrets only, communicated to a counsel or attorney, are inviolable in a court of justice, which have been entrusted to them whilst acting in their respective characters to the party as their client."—3 *Blackstone*, 370, *Note.*

contain important disclosures in regard to her criminality.* In this case, however, the disclosure was not originally made by the pastor; nor was the fact of the existence of such a letter made known by him. The fact that such a letter had been sent to him, was stated by the party herself; and the court, having this knowledge of it, *demanded* its production in court. It was submitted after taking legal advice, and the community justified the conduct of the pastor. So the principle is regarded as well settled that a minister of religion *may* be required to disclose what has been communicated to him, whether at the "confessional," or as a pastor, which may be necessary to establish the guilt of a party; and that the fact that it had been communicated in confidence, and for spiritual advice, does *not* constitute a reason for refusing to disclose it.

(2.) But the point before us relates rather to the inquiry when the act of giving such information becomes *guilt*, or in what circumstances it is forbidden and wrong.

Perhaps all that need to be said on this point can be reduced to three heads: when it is for base purposes; when the innocent are betrayed; and when professional confidence is violated. The illustration of these points, after what has been said, need not detain us long.

First. When it is for base purposes. This would include all those cases where it is for gain; where it is to secure favour; and where it is from envy, malice, spite, or revenge. The case of Doeg was, manifestly, an instance of this kind, where the motive was not that of promoting public justice, or preserving the peace of the realm, but where it was to ingratiate himself into the favour of Saul, and secure his own influence at court. The parallel case of the Ziphims (Psalm liv.) was another instance of this kind, where, so far as the narrative goes, it is supposable that the only motive was to obtain the favour of Saul, or to secure a reward, by betraying an innocent and a persecuted man who had fled to them for a secure retreat. The case of Judas Iscariot was another instance of this kind. He betrayed his Saviour; he agreed, for a paltry reward, to disclose his place of usual retreat—a place to which he had resorted so often for prayer, that Judas knew that he could be found there. It was for no wrong done to him. It was from no regard to public peace or justice. It was not because he even supposed the Saviour to be guilty. He knew that he was innocent. He even himself confessed this in the most solemn manner, and in the very presence of those with whom he had made the infamous bargain—and with just such a result as the mean and the wicked must always expect, when those for whom they have performed a mean and wicked act have no further use for them.† Such, also, is the case of the "sycophant." That a man *might*, in some circumstances, give information about the exportation of "figs" contrary to law, or might even be required to do it, may be true; but it was equally true that it was not commonly done for any patriotic or honourable ends, but from the most base and ignoble motives; and hence the sense of mankind in regard to the nature of the transaction has been perpetuated in the world itself. So, in a school, there is often no better motive than envy, or rivalship, or malice, or a desire to obtain favour or reward, when information is given by one school-boy of another; and hence the contempt and scorn with which a boy who acts under the influence of these motives is always regarded—emblem of what he is likely to meet in all his subsequent life.

Second. The innocent are never to be betrayed. The Divine law pertaining to this seems to be perfectly plain, and the principles of that law are

* In the "Burch" case, tried in Chicago.

† "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. *And they said, What is that to us?*"—Matt. xxvii. 4.

such as to commend themselves to the consciences of all mankind. Thus, Isaiah xvi. 3, 4, "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." Also in Deut. xxiii. 15, 16, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him."

On these passages I remark:

1. That they are settled principles of the law of God. There is no ambiguity in them. They have not been repealed. They are, therefore, still binding, and extend to all cases pertaining to the innocent and the oppressed.

2. They accord with the convictions of the human mind—the deep-seated principles which God has laid in our very being, as designed to guide us in our treatment of others.

3. They accord with some of the highest principles of self-sacrifice as illustrated in history—the noblest exhibitions of human nature in giving an asylum to the oppressed and the wronged; instances where life has been perilled, or even given up, rather than that the persecuted, the innocent, and the wronged, should be surrendered or betrayed. How often, in the history of the church has life been thus endangered, because a refuge and a shelter was furnished to the persecuted Christian—the poor outcast, driven from his home under oppressive laws! How honourable have men esteemed such acts to be! How illustrious is the example of those who have at all hazards opened their arms to receive the oppressed, and to welcome the persecuted and the wronged! In the year 1685, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz, eight hundred thousand professed followers of the Saviour — Huguenots — were driven from their homes and their country, and compelled to seek safety by flight to other lands. In their own country, fire and the sword spread desolation everywhere, and the voice of wailing filled the land. Those who could flee, did flee. The best men of France—those of noblest blood—fled in every direction, and sought a refuge in other countries. They fled—carrying with them not only the purest form and the best spirit of religion, but the best knowledge of the arts, to all the surrounding nations. Belgium, Holland, England, Scotland, Switzerland, opened their arms to welcome the fugitives. Our own country welcomed them—then, as now, an asylum for the oppressed. In every part of our land they found a home. Thousands of the noblest spirits—the best men of the South and the North, were composed of these exiles and wanderers. But suppose the world had been barred against them. Suppose they had been driven back again to their native land, poor persecuted men and women returned to suffering and to death. How justly mankind would have execrated such an act!

The same principles are applicable to the fugitive from slavery. Indeed, one of the texts quoted relates to this very point, and is designed to guide men on this subject in all ages and in all lands. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee." No law could possibly be more explicit; none could be more humane, just, or proper; and consequently all those provisions in human laws which require men to aid in delivering up such fugitives are violations of the law of God,—have no binding obligation on the conscience,—and are, at all hazards, to be disobeyed. Acts v. 29; iv. 19.

Third. Professional confidence is not to be betrayed. We have seen, in the remarks before made, that those who are employed as counsellors in the courts, cannot be required to communicate facts which are stated

to *them* by their clients, but that confidential communications made to *others* may be demanded in promoting the interests of justice. The point now, however, relates only to the cases where professional confidence is voluntarily violated, or where knowledge thus obtained is made use of in a manner which cannot be sanctioned either by the principles of honour or religion. Two such instances may be referred to as illustrations:

(*a.*) One occurs when a clergyman, to whom such knowledge is imparted *as* a clergyman for spiritual advice, instruction, or comfort, abuses the trust reposed in him, by making use of that information for any other purpose whatever. It is entrusted to him for that purpose alone. It is committed to him as a man of honour. The secret is lodged with him, with the implied understanding that it is there to remain, and to be employed *only* for that purpose. Whether at the "confessional" of the Roman Catholic, or whether made in the confidence reposed in a Protestant pastor, the principle is the same. Whatever advantage may be taken of that secret for the promotion of any other ends; whatever object the minister of religion may propose to secure, based on the fact that he is in possession of it; whatever influence he may choose to exert, founded on the assumption that he *could* divulge it; whatever statement he may make in regard to such a person,—based on the fact that he is in possession of knowledge which he has, but which he is not at liberty to communicate,—and designed to injure the person; whatever use he may make of it as enabling him to form an estimate for his own purposes of what occurs in a family; or, in general, whatever communication he may make of it, of any kind (except under process of law, and because the law demands it), is to be regarded as a betrayal of professional confidence. The interests of religion require that a pastor should be regarded as among the most faithful of confidential friends; and no men, or class of men, should be placed in such circumstances that they may, at the "confessional," or in any other way, have the means of arriving at secrets which may be employed for any purposes of their own whatever.

(*b.*) It is a breach of professional confidence when a lawyer is entrusted with knowledge in one case by a client, which, by being employed in another case, and on another occasion, he uses against him. The secret, whatever it may be, which is entrusted to him by a client, is for that case alone; and is, to all intents, *to die* when that case is determined. It is dishonourable in any way for him to engage as counsel for another party against his former client when, by even the remotest possibility, the knowledge obtained in the former occurrence could come as an element in the determination of the case, or could be made use of to the advantage of his new client. Every sentiment of honesty and honour demands that if there is a *possibility* of this, or if there would be the remotest *temptation* of the kind, he should at once promptly and firmly decline to engage against his former client.

In human nature there are two classes of propensities or principles:—those which are generous, magnanimous, gentle, kind, benevolent, large-hearted, humane, noble; and those which are low, grovelling, sordid, sycophantic, mean, ignoble.

Though man is destitute of holiness, and though, as I believe, not one or all of these things which I have referred to as generous and noble can by cultivation become true religion, or constitute, by mere development, what is needful to secure the salvation of the soul, yet they *are* to be cultivated, for they are invaluable in society, and necessary to the happiness and the progress of mankind. On these, more than on most other things, the happiness of families, and the welfare of the world depend; and whatever may be our views of the necessity and value of

religion, we are not required to undervalue "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," or those virtues which we connect, in our apprehensions, with that which is manly and honourable, and which tend to elevate and ennoble the race.

Christianity has, if I may so express it, a "natural affinity" for one class of these propensities; it has none for the other. It, too, is generous, humane, gentle, kind, benevolent, noble; it blends easily with these things when it finds them in human nature; and it produces them in the soul which is fully under its influence, where they did not exist before. It has no more affinity for that which is mean, ignoble, morose, sycophantic, than it has for profanity or falsehood; for dishonesty or fraud; for licentiousness or ambition.

That true religion may be found in hearts where these virtues, so generous and noble, are not developed, or where there is not a little that dishonours religion as *not* large, and liberal, and courteous, and gentlemanly, it is, perhaps, impossible to deny. There are souls essentially so mean, so sycophantic, so narrow, so sour, and so morose, that a large part of the work of sanctification *seems* to be reserved for the close of life—for that mysterious and unexplained process by which all who are redeemed are made perfect when they pass "through the valley of the shadow of death." But though there *may* be religion in such a case, it is among the lowest forms of piety. What is mean, ignoble, and narrow, is no part of the Christian religion, and can never be transmuted into it.

There has come down to us as the result of the progress of civilization in this world, and with the highest approbation of mankind, a class of virtues connected with the ideas of honour and honourableness. That the sentiment of honour has been abused among men; that an attempt has been made to set it up as the governing principle in cases where conscience should rule; that in doing this a code has been established which, in many respects, is a departure from the rules of morality, there can be no doubt;—but still there *are* just principles of honour which Christianity does not disdain; which are to be incorporated into our principles of religion, and which we are to endeavour to instil into the hearts of our children. Whatever there is in the world that is "true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report;" whatever belongs to the name of "virtue," and whatever deserves "praise," is to be blended with our religion, constituting our idea of a Christian man.

It is the blending of these things—the union of Christian principle with what is noble, and manly, and generous, and humane—which, in any case, entitles to the highest appellation that can be given to any of our race,—that of THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

PSALM LIII.

There is a remarkable resemblance between this psalm and Ps. xiv. Both are ascribed to the same author, David; and each pursues the same line of thought,—the folly and wickedness of Atheism. They both show that the belief that there is no God is not a harmless idea, or a mere speculation, but that it has important consequences *on* the life, and is naturally connected with a *wicked* life, vers. 3, 4.

The difference in the two compositions is (*a*) in the title; and (*b*) in the psalm itself.

(*a*) In the title. Both psalms are ascribed to David, and both are dedicated to the "Chief Musician." But in the title to the psalm before us, there is this addition: "Upon Mahalath, Maschil." On the meaning of the term *Maschil*, see Introd. to Ps. xxxii. The term here would seem to imply that the psalm was designed to give *instruction* on an important subject, but why it is prefixed to this psalm, and not to the others, we have no means of determining. The word, rendered *Mahalath* — מָחֲלַת — occurs only here and in the title to Ps. lxxxviii. It is supposed by Gesenius to denote a stringed instrument, as a

PSALM LIII.

To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil. *A Psalm* of David.

THE [w] fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt [x] are they, and have done [y] abominable iniquity: *there is* none that doeth good.

2 God [z] looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.

3 Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become

w Ps. xiv. 1, etc. *x* Gen. vi. 5, 12. *y* Eph. v. 12. *z* Ps. xi. 4.

lute or guitar, that was designed to be accompanied with the voice. De Wette renders it *flute*. Luther renders it "for a choir, to be sung by one another;" that is, a responsive choir. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate retain the original word with no attempt to translate it. Prof. Alexander renders it *disease*, because a form of the word "almost identical" occurs (Ex. xv. 26; Prov. xviii. 14; 2 Chron. xxi. 15) meaning *disease*, and he supposes reference is to "the spiritual malady with which all mankind are infected, and which is really the theme or subject of the composition." It is true that there *is* a word—מָחֳלָה—*similar* to this, meaning *disease;* but it is also true that the word here used is never employed in that sense, and equally true that such a construction here is forced and unnatural. The obvious supposition is that it refers to an instrument of music.

(*b*) The difference in the psalms themselves is mainly that in Ps. liii. the sixth verse of Ps. xiv. is omitted, and that in the other parts of the psalm there are *enlargements* designed to illustrate or to explain more fully the course of thought in the psalm. It is not known by whom these changes were made. They are, as De Wette remarks, such as could not have occurred by an error in transcribing, and they must have been made by design. Whether the changes were made by the author, or by some one who collected and arranged the psalms, and who, adopting the main thoughts of Ps. xiv., inserted additions conveying new phases of thought, though without intending to supersede the use of the original composition, it is not possible now to determine. It is by no means an improbable supposition that the author of the psalm—David—may have revised it himself, and made these changes as expressing more fully his idea, while, as embodying valuable thoughts, it was deemed not undesirable to retain the original psalm in the collection as proper to be used in the service of God. Similar changes occur in Ps. xviii., as compared with 2 Sam. xxii., where that psalm occurs in the original form of composition. There is no *evidence* that the alteration was made by a later writer; we may doubt whether a later writer *would* alter a composition of David, and publish it under his name.

For an analysis of the psalm, see Introd. to Ps. xiv.

1. *The fool hath said in his heart,* etc. For the meaning of this verse, see Notes on Ps. xiv. 1. The only change in this verse—a change which does not affect the sense—is the substitution of the word *iniquity,* in Ps. liii., for *works,* in Ps. xiv.

2. *God looked down from heaven,* etc. See Notes on Ps. xiv. 2. The only change which occurs in this verse is the substitution of the word *Elohim,* rendered *God,* for *Jehovah,* rendered LORD, in Ps. xiv. 2. The same change occurs also in vers. 4, 6. It is to be observed, also, that the word *Jehovah* does not occur in this psalm, but that the term used is uniformly *Elohim,* God. In Ps. xiv. both terms are found,—the word Elohim three times (vers. 1, 2, 5), and the word *Jehovah* four times, vers. 2, 4, 6, 7. It is impossible to account for this change. There is nothing in it, however, to indicate anything in regard to the authorship of the psalm or to the time when it was written, for both these words are frequently used by David elsewhere.

3. *Every one of them is gone back.* See Notes on Ps. xiv. 3. The only variation here in the two psalms is in the substitution of the word—סָג, *sog,* for סָר, *sor,*—words almost identical in form and in sense. The only dif-

filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

5 There [1] were they in great fear, [a] *where* no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him

[1] *they feared a fear.* [a] Prov. xxviii. 1.

ference in meaning is, that the former word—the word used here—means *to draw back*, or *to go back;* the other, the word used in Ps. xiv., means *to go off, to turn aside.* Each of them indicates a departure from God; a departure equally fatal and equally guilty, whether men turn *back* from following him, or turn *aside* to something else. Both of these forms of apostasy occur with lamentable frequency.

4. *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* See Notes on Ps. xiv. 4. The only change in this verse is in the omission of the word *all.* This word, as it occurs in Ps. xiv. ("*all* the workers of iniquity"), makes the sentence stronger and more emphatic. It is designed to affirm in the most absolute and unqualified manner that *none* of these workers of iniquity had any true knowledge of God. This has been noticed by critics as the only instance in which the expression in Ps. xiv. is stronger than in the revised form of the psalm before us.

5. *There were they in great fear,* etc. Marg., as in Heb., *they feared a fear.* For the general meaning of the verse, see Notes on Ps. xiv. 5. There is, however, an important change introduced here,—the most important in the psalm. The general sentiment of two verses (5, 6) in Ps. xiv. is here compressed into one, and yet with such an important change as to show that it was by design, and apparently to adapt it to some new circumstance. The solution of this would seem to be that the original form (Ps. xiv.) was suited to some occasion then present to the mind of the writer, and that some new event occurred to which the general sentiment in the psalm might be easily applied (or which would express that as well as could be done by an entirely new composition), but that, in order to adapt it to this new purpose, it would be proper to insert some expression more *particularly* referring to the event. The principal of these additions is found in the verse before us. In Ps. xiv. 5, 6, the language is, "There were they in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous; ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge." In the psalm before us, the language is, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." ¶ Where *no fear was.* The reference here, as in Ps. xiv. 5, is to the fear or consternation of the people of God on account of the designs and efforts of the wicked. They were apprehensive of being overthrown by the wicked. The design of the psalmist in both cases is to show that there was no occasion for that fear. In Ps. xiv. 5, he shows it by saying that "God is in the congregation of the righteous." In the psalm before us he says expressly that there was no ground for that fear—"where no fear was,"—and he adds, as a reason, that God had "scattered the bones" of them "that encamped against" them. That is, though there *seemed* to be occasion for fear,—though those enemies were formidable in numbers and in power,—yet God was their friend, and he had now *showed* them that they had no real occasion for alarm by dispersing those foes. ¶ *For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth* against *thee.* Of the besieger. This, as already intimated, would seem to have been introduced in order to adapt the psalm to the particular circumstances of the occasion when it

that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because[b] God hath despised them.

6 Oh [1] that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When [c] God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

b Jer. vi. 30.

[1] *Who will give salvations*, etc.

c Ps. cxxvi. 1—3.

was revised. From this clause, as well as others, it appears probable that the particular occasion contemplated in the revision of the psalm was an attack on Jerusalem, or a siege of the city—an attack which had been repelled, or a siege which the enemy had been compelled to raise. That is, they had been overthrown, and their bones had been scattered, unburied, on the ground. The whole language of Ps. xiv., thus modified, would be well suited to such an occurrence. The general description of atheism and wickedness in Ps. xiv. would be appropriate in reference to such an attempt on the city, —for those who made the attack might well be represented as practically saying that there was no God; as being corrupt and abominable; as bent on iniquity; as polluted and defiled; and as attempting to eat up the people of God as they eat bread; and as those who did not call upon God. The verse before us would describe them as discomfited, and as being scattered in slaughtered heaps upon the earth. ¶ *Thou hast put* them *to shame.* That is, they had been put to shame by being overthrown; by being unsuccessful in their attempt. The word "thou" here must be understood as referring to God. ¶ *Because God hath despised them.* He has wholly disapproved their character, and he has "despised" their attempts;—that is, he has shown that they were not formidable or to be feared. They were efforts which might be looked on with contempt, and he had evinced this by showing how easily they could be overthrown.

6. *Oh that the salvation of Israel,* etc. The only change here from Ps. xiv. 7 is that the word *Elohim,* God, is substituted for *Jehovah,* LORD, and that the word rendered *salvation* is here in the plural. On the supposition that the psalm was *adapted* to a state of things when the city had been besieged, and the enemy discomfited, this language would express the deep and earnest desire of the people that the Lord would grant deliverance. Perhaps it may be supposed, also, that at the time of such a siege, and while the Lord interposed to save them *from* the siege, it was also true that there was some general danger hanging over the people; that even the nation might be described as in some sense "captive;" or that some portions of the land were subject to a foreign power. The desire expressed is, that the deliverance might be complete, and that the whole land might be brought to the possession of liberty, and be rescued from all foreign domination. That time, when it should arrive, would be the occasion of universal rejoicing.

PSALM LIV.

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and it bears all the internal marks of being his composition. The title suggests, doubtless with accuracy, the occasion on which it was composed, as well as the design for which it was intended. It is addressed or dedicated to the "chief Musician," to be set by him to music, and to be employed in the public service of God. See Introd. to Ps. iv.,—where, also, see the phrase "on Neginoth." The word "Maschil" denotes that it was a *didactic* poem, or a poem designed to set forth important truth. See Introd. to Ps. xxxii. The *occasion* on which the psalm was composed is indicated by the statement that it was "when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?" Such an occurrence is twice recorded; 1 Sam. xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1. It would seem not improbable

PSALM LIV.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil. *A Psalm* of David, when the *d* Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

SAVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.
2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.
3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: *e* they have not set God before them. Selah.

d 1 Sam. xxiii. 19. *e* Ps. xxxvi. 1.

that they in fact made *two* communications to Saul on the subject at different times, or that David was *twice* in their country, and that they twice endeavoured to betray him to Saul. On the first occasion (1 Sam. xxiii. 19, *et seq.*) Saul, after commending them for their zeal, expressly desired them (ver. 22) to return, and look carefully that they might be sure that he was there, or that he had not escaped into some other place, "for," he adds, "it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly." Before making the attempt himself to seize him, he wished to be certified that he was really there. On their return, the Ziphims found that David *had* escaped to "Maon" (ver. 24), and they came again and informed Saul of that fact. After a vain effort on the part of Saul to find him, and after some other occurrences recorded in 1 Sam. xxiv., xxv., it would seem that David came *again* into the country of the Ziphites, and that they again informed Saul of that fact, 1 Sam. xxvi. 1. Of course, it is not known precisely on *which* of these occasions the psalm was composed.

This psalm is similar in design to Ps. lii.; and is intended, like that, to characterise the base conduct of *informers*. The psalm consists of three parts:—(1) An earnest prayer for deliverance, vers. 1–3; (2) an expression of confident belief that God *would* interpose and deliver him, vers. 4, 5; (3) a resolution to render sacrifice to God, or to offer the tribute of praise, if he should be thus delivered, ver. 6, 7.

1. *Save me, O God, by thy name.* The word *name* here may include the perfections or attributes properly implied *in* the name. It is a calling on God *as* God, or in view of all that is implied in his name, or that constitutes the idea of "God." That *name* would imply all of power and benevolence that was necessary to secure his salvation or safety. The particular object of the prayer here is that God would save him from the design of the Ziphims to betray him to Saul. In some way David seems to have been apprised of the information which they had given to Saul, or at least to have suspected it so strongly that he felt it was necessary for him to move from place to place in order to find safety. ¶ *And judge me by thy strength.* The word *judge* here is used in the sense of declaring a judgment in his favour, or of vindicating him. See Notes on Ps. vii. 8. Comp. Ps. xviii. 20; xxvi. 1; xliii. 1. The idea is, Vindicate or save me by thy power.

2. *Hear my prayer, O God.* My earnest cry for deliverance from the designs of those who would betray me. ¶ *Give ear to the words of my mouth. Incline* thine ear to me, as one does who wishes to hear. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 6.

3. *For strangers are risen up against me.* That is, foreigners; those of another nation or land. Saul and his friends who sought the life of David were his own countrymen; these persons who sought to betray him were another people. They attempted to gain the favour of Saul, or to secure a reward from him, by betraying to him an innocent man whom he was persecuting. ¶ *And oppressors seek after my soul.* Seek after my life. The word here rendered *oppressors* means men of violence; the proud; the haughty; persecutors; tyrants. The word properly denotes those who exert their power in an arbitrary manner, or not under the sanction of law. ¶ *They have not set God before them.* They do not act as in the presence of God. They do not regard his authority.

4 Behold, God *is* mine helper: the *f* Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.

5 He shall reward evil unto[1] mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.

6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD, for *it is* good.

7 For he hath delivered me

f Ps. cxviii. 7.

[1] *those that observe me.*

See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 1. The word *Selah* here merely marks a musical pause. It indicates nothing in regard to the sense.

4. *Behold, God* is *mine helper.* That is, God alone *can* aid me in these circumstances, and *to* him I confidently look. ¶ *The Lord* is *with them that uphold my soul.* My friends; those who have rallied around me to defend me; those who comfort me by their presence; those who sustain me in my cause, and who keep me from sinking under the burden of my accumulated troubles.

5. *He shall reward evil unto mine enemies.* Marg., *those that observe me.* The original word here means literally *to twist, to twist together;* then, to press together; then, to *oppress,* or to treat as an enemy. The reference here is to those who pressed upon him as enemies, or who endeavoured to crush him. The idea is that God would recompense them for this conduct, or that he would deal with them as they deserved. ¶ *Cut them off in thy truth.* In thy faithfulness; in thy regard for what is right. This is simply a prayer, or an expression of strong confidence, that God would deal with them as they deserved, or that he would not suffer such conduct to pass without a proper expression of his sense of the wrong. There is no evidence that David in this prayer was prompted by private or vindictive feeling.

6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* The Hebrew words rendered *freely,* mean *with willingness, voluntariness, spontaneousness.* The idea is, that he would do it of a free or willing mind; without constraint or compulsion; voluntarily. The reference is to a free-will or voluntary offering, as distinguished from one that was prescribed by law. See Ex. xxxv. 29; xxxvi. 3; Lev. vii. 16; xxii. 18; Num. xv. 3; xxix. 39. The idea is, that as the result of the Divine interposition which he prayed for, he would bring voluntary offerings to God in acknowledgment of his goodness and mercy. ¶ *I will praise thy name, O* LORD. I will praise thee. See Ps. lii. 9. ¶ *For* it is *good.* That is, God himself is benevolent; and David says that he would express his sense of God's goodness by offering him praise.

7. *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.* This is spoken either in confident expectation of what *would be,* or as the statement of a general truth that God *did* deliver him from all trouble. It was what he had experienced in his past life; it was what he confidently expected in all time to come. ¶ *And mine eye hath seen* his desire *upon mine enemies.* The words *his desire* are not in the original. A literal translation would be, "And on my enemies hath my eye looked." The *meaning* is, that they had been overthrown; they had been unsuccessful in their malignant attempts against him; and he had had the satisfaction of *seeing* them thus discomfited. Their overthrow had not merely been reported to him, but he had had ocular demonstration of its reality. This is not the expression of *malice,* but of *certainty.* The *fact* on which the eye of the psalmist rested was his own safety. Of that he was assured by what he had witnessed with his own eyes; and in that fact he rejoiced. There is no more reason to charge malignity in this case on David, or to suppose that he rejoiced in the destruction of his enemies *as such,* than there is in our own case when we are rescued from

out of all trouble; and mine eye hath [g] seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

[g] Ps. xcii. 11; cxii. 8, 10.

impending danger. It is proper for Americans to rejoice in their freedom, and to give thanks to God for it; nor, in doing this, is it to be supposed that there is a malicious pleasure in the fact that in the accomplishment of this thousands of British soldiers were slain, or that thousands of women and children as the result of their discomfiture were made widows and orphans. We can be thankful for the mercies which we enjoy without having any malignant delight in those woes of others through which our blessings may have come upon us.

PSALM LV.

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David," and there is every reason to believe that it is properly ascribed to him. It is addressed to "the chief Musician"—to be by him set to appropriate music, that it might be employed in the public worship of God. See Notes on the title to Ps. iv. On the word *Neginoth* in the title, see also Note in the Introduction of Ps. iv.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not indicated in the title, nor can it be with certainty ascertained. The author of the Chaldee Paraphrase refers the psalm to the time of Absalom and to his rebellion, and this is also the opinion of the Jewish expositors in general. They suppose that the psalm was composed on occasion of the departure of David from Jerusalem, when he had heard of the rebellion, and that the psalm has special reference to the time when, having fled from the city, and having come to the ascent of the Mount of Olives, while all was consternation around him, he learned that Ahithophel also was among the conspirators, which was the consummation of his calamity, 2 Sam. xv. 31. Others suppose that the psalm was composed when David was in Keilah, and when, surrounded by foes, he was apprehensive that the inhabitants of that place would deliver him into the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 1-12. Of all the known events in the life of David, the supposition which regards the psalm as composed during the rebellion of Absalom, and at the special time when he learned that the man whom he had trusted—Ahithophel—was among the traitors, is the most probable. All the circumstances in the psalm agree with his condition at that time, and the occasion was one in which the persecuted and much-afflicted king would be *likely* to pour out the desires of his heart before God. Paulus and De Wette have remarked that it is evident from the psalm that the enemies to whom the author refers were inhabitants of the same city with himself, and that the danger was from treason within the walls of the city, ver. 10. This seems not improbable, and this agrees well with the supposition that the scene of the psalm is laid in the time of the rebellion of Absalom.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

(1) The prayer of the psalmist that God would hear his cry, vers. 1-3.

(2) A general description of his trouble and sorrows, as being so great that he was overwhelmed, and such as to make him wish for the wings of a dove that he might fly away, and be at rest, vers. 4-8.

(3) The causes, or sources of his trouble, vers. 9-14;—

(*a*) The *general* fact that he was surrounded by enemies; that there were violence, strife, and mischief in the city, vers. 9-11.

(*b*) The *particular* fact that some one in whom he had put confidence, and who had been his special friend, was, to his surprise, found among his enemies, and had proved himself faithless to him, vers. 12-14.

(4) His earnest prayer for the destruction of his enemies, ver. 15.

(5) His own confidence in God; his reliance on the Divine mercy and protection in the time of trouble and danger; and his assurance that God would interpose in his behalf, vers. 16-21.

(6) A general exhortation, as a practical lesson from all that had occurred, to trust in God,—to cast every burden on him,—with the assurance that the righteous would never be moved, but that the wicked must be subdued, vers. 22, 23.

PSALM LV.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil. *A Psalm* of David.

GIVE ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

3 Because of the voice of the

1. *Give ear to my prayer.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1; xvii. 6. This is the language of earnestness. The psalmist was in deep affliction, and he pleaded, therefore, that God would not turn away from him in his troubles. ¶ *And hide not thyself from my supplication.* That is, Do not withdraw thyself, or render thyself inaccessible to my prayer. Do not so *conceal* thyself that I may not have the privilege of approaching thee. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 15. See also Ezek. xxii. 26; Prov. xxviii. 27; Lev. xx. 4; 1 Sam. xii. 3. The same word is used in all these places, and the general meaning is that of "shutting the eyes upon," as implying neglect. So also in Lam. iii. 56, the phrase "to hide the ear" means to turn away so as not to hear. The earnest prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would not, as it were, withdraw or conceal himself, but would give free access to himself in prayer. The language is, of course, figurative, but it illustrates what often occurs when God seems to withdraw himself; when our prayers do not appear to be heard; when God is apparently unwilling to attend to us.

2. *Attend unto me, and hear me.* This also is the language of earnest supplication, as if he was afraid that God would not regard his cry. These varied forms of speech show the intense earnestness of the psalmist, and his deep conviction that he *must* have help from God. ¶ *I mourn.* The word here used—רוּד, *rud*—means properly to wander about; to ramble —especially applied to animals that have broken loose; and then, to inquire after, to seek, as one does "by running up and down;" hence to desire, to wish. Thus in Hosea xi. 12, —"Judah runs wild towards God,"— in our translation, "Judah yet ruleth with God." The word occurs also in Jer. ii. 31, "We are lords" (marg., have dominion); and in Gen. xxvii. 40, "When thou shalt have the dominion." It is not elsewhere found in the Scriptures. The idea here seems not to be to *mourn*, but to *inquire earnestly;* to seek; to look for, as one does who wanders about, or who looks every way for help. David was in deep distress. He looked in every direction. He earnestly desired to find God as a Helper. He was in the condition of one who had lost his way, or who had lost what was most valuable to him; and he directed his eyes most earnestly towards God for help. ¶ *In my complaint.* The word here employed commonly means speech, discourse, meditation. It here occurs in the sense of *complaint*, as in Job vii. 13; ix. 27; xxi. 4; xxiii. 2; Ps. cxlii. 2; 1 Sam. i. 16. It is not used, however, to denote complaint in the sense of fault-finding, but in the sense of deep distress. As the word is now commonly used, we connect with it the idea of fault-finding, complaining, accusing, or the idea that we have been dealt with unjustly. This is not the meaning in this place, or in the Scriptures generally. It is the language of a *troubled*, not of an *injured* spirit. ¶ *And make a noise.* To wit, by prayer; or, by groaning. The psalmist did not hesitate to give vent to his feelings by groans, or sobs, or prayers. Such expressions are not merely indications of deep feeling, but they are among the appointed means of relief. They are the effort which nature makes to throw off the burden, and if they are without murmuring or impatience they are not wrong. See Isa. xxxviii. 14; lix. 11; Heb. v. 7; Matt. xxvii. 46.

3. *Because of the voice of the enemy.* He now states the cause of his troubles.

enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for [h] they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

4 My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors [i] of death are fallen upon me.

5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath [1] overwhelmed me.

[h] 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8.

[i] Ps. cxvi. 3. [1] *covered.*

He had been, and was, unjustly treated by others. The particular idea in the word "*voice*" here is, that he was suffering from slanderous reproaches; from assaults which had been made on his character. He was charged with evil conduct, and the charge was made in such a manner that he could not meet it. The result was, that a series of calamities had come upon him which was quite overwhelming. ¶ *Because of the oppression of the wicked.* The word here rendered *oppression* occurs nowhere else. The *verb* from which it is derived occurs twice, Amos ii. 13: "Behold, I am *pressed* under you as a cart is *pressed* that is full of sheaves." The idea is that of crushing by a heavy weight; and hence of crushing by affliction. The "wicked" alluded to here, if the supposition referred to in the Introduction about the occasion of the psalm is correct, were Absalom and those who were associated with him in the rebellion, particularly Ahithophel, who had showed himself false to David, and had united with his enemies in their purpose to drive him from his throne. ¶ *For they cast iniquity upon me.* That is, they charge me with sin; they attempt to justify themselves in their treatment of me by accusing me of wrong-doing, or by endeavouring to satisfy themselves that I *deserve* to be treated in this manner. If this refers to the time of the rebellion of Absalom, the allusion would be to the charges, brought by him against his father, of severity and injustice in his administration, 2 Sam. xv. 2–6. ¶ *And in wrath they hate me.* In their indignation, in their excitement, they are full of hatred against me. This was manifested by driving him from his throne and his home.

4. *My heart is sore pained within me.* Heavy and sad; that is, I am deeply afflicted. The word rendered *is sore pained,* means properly to turn round; to twist; to dance in a circle; to be whirled round; and then to twist or writhe with pain, especially applied to a woman in travail, Isa. xiii. 8; xxiii. 4; xxvi. 18. Here the idea is, that he was in deep distress and anguish. It is easy to see that this would be so, if the psalm refers to the revolt of Absalom. The ingratitude and rebellion of a son,—the fact of being driven away from his throne,—the number of his enemies,—the unexpected news that Ahithophel was among them,—and the entire uncertainty as to the result, justified the use of this strong language. ¶ *And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.* The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther, render this *the fear of death,* as if he were afraid for his life, or afraid that the result of all this would be his death. A more natural construction, however, is to suppose that the reference is to the ordinary pains of death, and that he means to say that the pangs which he endured were like the pangs of death. The words "*are fallen*" suggest the idea that this had come suddenly upon him, like a "horror of great darkness" (comp. Gen. xv. 12), or as if the gloomy shadow of death had suddenly crossed his path. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxiii. 4. The calamities had come suddenly upon him; the conspiracy had been suddenly developed; and he had been suddenly driven away.

5. *Fearfulness and trembling.* Fear so great as to produce trembling. Comp. Notes on Job iv. 14. He knew not when these things would end. How far the spirit of rebellion

6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest.

7 Lo, *then* would I wander far

had spread he knew not, and he had no means of ascertaining. It seemed as if he would be wholly overthrown; as if his power was wholly at an end; as if even his life was in the greatest peril. ¶ *And horror hath overwhelmed me.* Marg., as in Heb., *covered me.* That is, it had come upon him so as to cover or envelop him entirely. The shades of horror and despair spread all around and above him, and all things were filled with gloom. The word rendered *horror* occurs only in three other places;—Ezek. vii. 18, rendered (as here) *horror;* Job xxi. 6, rendered *trembling;* and Isa. xxi. 4, rendered *fearfulness.* It refers to that state when we are deeply agitated with fear.

6. *And I said.* That is, when I saw these calamities coming upon me, and knew not what the result was to be. ¶ *Oh that I had wings like a dove!* Literally, "Who will give me wings like a dove?" or, Who will give me the pinion of a dove? The original word—אֵבְרָה, *aiber*—means properly, *a wing-feather;* a pinion; the penna major or flag-feather of a bird's wing by which he steers his course,—as of an eagle, Isa. xl. 31, or of a dove, as here. It is distinguished from the wing itself, Ezek. xvii. 3: "A great eagle, with great wings, *long-winged,* full of feathers." The reference here is supposed to be to the turtle-dove—a species of dove common in Palestine. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 1. These doves, it is said, are never tamed. "Confined in a cage, they droop, and, like Cowper, sigh for 'A lodge in some vast wilderness—some boundless contiguity of shade;' and no sooner are they set at liberty, than they flee to their mountains." Land and the Book (Dr. Thomson), vol. i., p. 416. The annexed cut will furnish a good illustration of the dove here referred to. ¶ For then *would I fly away, and be at rest.* I would escape from these dangers, and be in a place of safety. How often do we feel this in



times of trouble! How often do we wish that we could get beyond the reach of enemies; of sorrows; of afflictions! How often do we sigh to be in a place where we might be assured that we should be safe from *all* annoyances; from all trouble! There *is* such a place, but not on earth. David might have borne his severest troubles with him if he could have fled,—for those troubles are in the heart, and a mere change of place does not affect them; or he might have found new troubles in the place that *seemed* to him to be a place of peace and of rest. But there is a world which trouble never enters. That world is heaven; to that world we shall soon go, if we are God's children; and there we shall find absolute and eternal rest. Without "the wings of a dove," we *shall* soon fly away and be at rest. None of the troubles of earth will accompany us there; no new troubles will spring up there to disturb our peace.

7. *Lo, then would I wander far off.* Literally, "Lo, I would make the distance far by wandering;" I would separate myself far from these troubles. ¶ And *remain in the wilderness.* Literally, I would sojourn; or, I would pass the night; or, I would put up for the night.

off, *and* remain in the wilderness. Selah.

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.

9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues: for I have seen[k] violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go

k Jer. vi. 7.

The idea is taken from a traveller who puts up for the night, or who rests for a night in his weary travels, and seeks repose. Comp. Gen. xix. 2; xxxii. 21; 2 Sam. xii. 16; Judges xix. 13. The word *wilderness* means, in the Scripture, a place not inhabited by man; a place where wild beasts resort; a place uncultivated. It does not denote, as with us, an extensive forest. It might be a place of rocks and sands, but the essential idea is, that it was not inhabited. See Notes on Matt. iv. 1. In such a place, remote from the habitations of men, he felt that he might be at rest.

8. *I would hasten my escape.* I would make haste to secure an escape. I would not delay, but I would flee at once. ¶ *From the windy storm* and *tempest.* From the calamities which have come upon me, and which beat upon me like a violent tempest. If this psalm was composed on occasion of the rebellion of Absalom, it is easy to see with what propriety this language is used. The troubles connected with that unnatural rebellion had burst upon him with the fury of a sudden storm, and threatened to sweep everything away.

9. *Destroy, O Lord.* The word rendered *destroy,* properly means to *swallow up;* to *devour,* with the idea of greediness. Isa. xxviii. 4; Ex. vii. 12; Jonah i. 17; Jer. li. 34. Then it is used in the sense of *destroy,* Job xx. 18; Prov. i. 12. The reference here is to the *persons* who had conspired against David. It is a prayer that they, and their counsels, might be destroyed: such a prayer as men always offer who pray for victory in battle. It is a prayer that *they* may be successful in what they regard as a righteous cause; but this implies a prayer that their enemies may be defeated and overcome. That is, they pray for success in what they have undertaken; and if it is right for them to attempt to *do* the thing, it is not wrong to *pray* that *they may be successful.* ¶ And *divide their tongues.* There is evident allusion here to the confusion of tongues at Babel (Gen. xi. 1–9); and as the language of those who undertook to build that tower was confounded so that they could not understand each other, so the psalmist prays that the counsels of those engaged against him might be confounded, or that they might be divided and distracted in their plans, so that they could not act in harmony. It is very probable that there is an allusion here to the prayer which David offered when he learned that Ahithophel was among the conspirators (2 Sam. xv. 31); "And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." This would tend to divide and distract the purposes of Absalom, and secure his defeat. ¶ *For I have seen violence and strife in the city.* In Jerusalem. Perhaps he had learned that among the conspirators there was not entire harmony, but that there were elements of "strife" and discord which led him to hope that their counsels would be confounded. There was little homogeneousness of aim and purpose among the followers of Absalom; and perhaps David knew enough of Ahithophel to see that *his* views, though he might be enlisted in the cause of the rebellion, would not be likely to harmonize with the views of the masses of those who were engaged in the revolt.

10. *Day and night they go about it, upon the walls thereof.* That is, continually. The word "*they*" in this place probably refers to the violence

about it, upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.

11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify

and strife mentioned in the preceding verse. They are here personified, and they seem to *surround* the city; to be everywhere moving, even on the very walls. They are like a besieging army. Inside and outside; in the midst of the city and on the walls, there was nothing but violence and strife,—conspiracy, rebellion, and crime. ¶ *Mischief also and sorrow* are *in the midst of it.* Crime abounded, and the result was anguish or sorrow. This language would well describe the scenes when Absalom rebelled; when the city was filled with conspirators and rebels; and when crime and anguish seemed to prevail in every part of it.

11. *Wickedness* is *in the midst thereof.* That is, the wickedness connected with rebellion and revolt. ¶ *Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.* They are everywhere. They are found in every street and alley. They pervade all classes of the people. The word rendered *deceit* means rather *oppression.* This was connected with *guile,* or with *deceit.* That is, wrong would be everywhere committed, and the perpetration of those wrongs would be connected with false representations, and false pretences,—a state of things that might be expected in the unnatural rebellion under Absalom.

12. *For* it was *not an enemy* that *reproached me.* The word *reproached* here refers to slander; calumny; abuse. It is not necessarily implied that it was in his presence, but he was apprized of it. When he says that it is not an enemy that did this, the meaning is that it was not one who had been an avowed and open foe. The severest part of the trial did not arise from the fact that it was done by such an one; for *that* he could have borne. That which overwhelmed him was the fact that the reproach came from one who had been his friend; or, the reproach which he felt most keenly came from one whom he had regarded as a personal confidant. It is not to be supposed that the psalmist means to say that he was *not* reproached by his enemies, for the whole structure of the psalm implies that this was so; but his anguish was made complete and unbearable by the discovery that one especially who had been his friend was found among those who reproached and calumniated him. The connexion leads us to suppose, if the right view (*Introd.*) has been taken of the occasion on which the psalm was composed, that the allusion here is to Ahithophel (2 Sam. xv. 31); and the particular distress here referred to was that which David experienced on learning that *he* was among the conspirators. A case of trouble remarkably resembling this is referred to in Ps. xli. 9. See Notes on that place. ¶ *Then I could have borne* it. The affliction would have been such as I could bear. Reproaches from an enemy, being known to be an enemy, we expect; and we feel them comparatively little. We attribute them to the very fact that such an one is an enemy, and that he feels it necessary to sustain himself by reproaching and calumniating us. We trust also that the world will understand them in that way; and will set them down to the mere fact that he *is* our enemy. In such a case there is only the testimony against us of one who is avowedly our foe, and who has every inducement to utter malicious words against us in order to sustain his own cause. But the case is different when the accuser and slanderer is one who has been our intimate friend. He is supposed

himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him.

13 But *it was* thou, [1] a man [1] mine equal, my guide, [m] and mine acquaintance.

l Ps. xli. 9.

[1] *according to my rank.*
m 2 Sam. xv. 12.

to know all about us. He has been admitted to our counsels. He has known our purposes and plans. He can speak not *slanderously* but *knowingly*. It is supposed that he could have no motive to speak ill of us except his own conviction of truth, and that it could be only the *strongest* conviction of truth—the existence of facts to which not even a friend could close his eyes—that could *induce* him to abandon us, and hold us up to reproach and scorn. So Ahithophel—the confidential counsellor and friend of David—would be supposed to be acquainted with his secret plans and his true character; and hence reproaches from such an one became unendurable. *Neither* was it *he that hated me.* That avowedly and openly hated me. If that had been the case, I should have expected such usage, and it would not injure me. ¶ That *did magnify* himself *against me.* That is, by asserting that I was a bad man, thus exalting himself in character above me, or claiming that he was more pure than I am. Or, it may mean, that exalted himself above me, or sought to reach the eminence of power in my downfall and ruin. ¶ *Then I would have hid myself from him.* I should have been like one pursued by an enemy who could hide himself in a cave, or in a fastness, or in the mountains, so as to be safe from his attacks. The arrows of malice would fly harmlessly by me, and I should be safe. Not so, when one reproached me who had been an intimate friend; who had known all about me; *and whose statements would be believed.*

13. *But* it was *thou, a man mine equal.* Marg., *a man according to my rank.* Septuagint, *ισόψυχε*, equal-souled, like-souled, "second self" (Thompson); Vulg., *unanimus*, of the same mind; Luther, *Geselle*, companion. The Hebrew word here used—עֲרֵךְ, *airech*—means properly a row or pile, as of the shew-bread piled one loaf on another, Ex. xl. 23; then it would naturally mean one of the same row or pile; of the same rank or condition. The word also means price, estimation, or value, Job xxviii. 13; Lev. v. 15, 18; vi. 6. Here the expression may mean a man *according to my estimation, value,* or *price;* that is, of the same value as myself (Gesenius, Lex.); or more probably it means a man of my own rank; according to my condition; that is, a man whom I esteemed as my equal, or whom I regarded and treated as a friend. ¶ *My guide.* The word here used properly denotes one who is familiar,—a friend,—from the verb אָלַף, *alaph*—to be associated with; to be familiar; to be accustomed to. The noun is frequently used to denote a military leader,—the head of a tribe,—a chieftain; and is, in this sense, several times employed in Gen. xxxvi. to denote the leaders or princes of the Edomites, where it is rendered *duke.* But here it seems to be used, not in the sense of a leader or a guide, but of a familiar friend. ¶ *And mine acquaintance.* The word here used is derived from the verb *to know*—יָדַע, *yada,*—and the proper idea is that of *one well known* by us; that is, one who keeps no secrets from us, but who permits us to understand him thoroughly. The phrase *mine acquaintance* is a feeble expression, and does not convey the full force of the original, which denotes a more intimate friend than would be suggested by the word *acquaintance.* It is language applied to one whom we thoroughly *know,* and who *knows* us; —and this exists only in the case of very intimate friends. All the expressions used in this verse would probably be applicable to Ahithophel, and to the intimacy between him and David.

14 [1] We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked [n] unto the house of God in company.

[1] *Who sweetened counsel.*
n Ps. xlii. 4.

15 Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick [o] into [1] hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings *and* among them.

o Num. xvi. 30—32. [1] Or, *the grave.*

14. *We took sweet counsel together.* Marg., *who sweetened counsel.* Literally, "We sweetened counsel together;" that is, We consulted together; we opened our minds and plans to each other; in other words, We found that happiness in each other which those do who freely and confidentially communicate their plans and wishes, —who have that mutual satisfaction which results from the approval of each other's plans. ¶ And *walked unto the house of God in company.* We went up to worship God together. The word rendered "*company*" means properly a noisy crowd, a multitude. The idea here is not that which would seem to be conveyed by our translation,—that they went up to the house of God in company *with each other,*—but that both went with the great company—the crowd—the multitude—that assembled to worship God. They were engaged in the same service, they united in the worship of the same God; associated with those that loved their Maker; belonged to the companionship of those who sought his favour. There is nothing that constitutes a stronger bond of friendship and affection than being united in the worship of God, or belonging to his people. Connexion with a church in acts of worship, *ought* always to constitute a strong bond of love, confidence, esteem, and affection; the consciousness of having been redeemed by the same blood of the atonement *should be* a stronger tie than any tie of natural friendship; and the expectation and hope of spending an eternity together in heaven *should* unite heart to heart in a bond which nothing—not even death —can sever.

15. *Let death seize upon them.* This would be more correctly rendered, "Desolations [are] upon them!" That is, Desolation, or destruction *will* certainly come upon them. There is in the original no necessary expression of a wish or prayer that this might be, but it is rather the language of certain assurance—the expression of a fact—that such base conduct—such wickedness —*would* make their destruction certain; that as God is just, they *must* be overwhelmed with ruin. Injury is sometimes done in the translation of the Scriptures by the insertion of a wish or prayer, where all that is *necessarily* implied in the original is the statement of a fact. This has been caused here by the somewhat uncertain meaning of the word which is used in the original. That word is יַשִּׁימֵוֶת, *yashimaveth.* It occurs nowhere else. Our translators understood it (as the LXX., the Vulgate, and Luther do) as made up of two words. More correctly, however, it is to be regarded as one word, meaning *desolations,* or *destructions.* So Gesenius (*Lex.*), Rosenmüller, and Prof. Alexander understand it. ¶ And *let them go down quick into hell. Alive,* or *living,*—for that is the meaning of the word *quick* here—חַיִּים, *hhayyim*—as it commonly is in the Scriptures. Comp. Lev. xiii. 10; Numb. xvi. 30; Acts x. 42; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. iv. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 5. The word *hell* is rendered in the margin *the grave.* The original word is *sheol,* and means here either the grave, or the abode of departed spirits. See Notes on Isa. xiv. 9; Job x. 21, 22. There is a harshness in the translation of the term here which is unnecessary, as the word *hell* with us now uniformly refers to the place of punishment for the wicked beyond death. The meaning here, however, is not that they would be consigned to wrath, but that they would be cut

16 As *p* for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.

17 Evening, *q* and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice.

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was*

p Ps. lxxiii. 28. *q* Dan. vi. 10; Acts iii. 1.

off from the land of the living. The idea is that their destruction might be as sudden as if the earth were to open, and they were to descend *alive* into the chasm. Probably there is an implied allusion here to the manner in which the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was destroyed, Numb. xvi. 31–33. Comp. Ps. cvi. 17. ¶ *For wickedness* is *in their dwellings*, and *among them*. Wickedness abounds in all their transactions. It is in their houses, and in their hearts. This is mentioned as a reason why they should be cut off and consigned to the grave. It *is* the reason why men are cut down at all; it is often a fact that wicked men are most manifestly cut down for their sins. And because it will be better for the community that the wicked should be punished than that they should escape, so there is no evidence that David cherished malice or ill-will in his heart. See General Introduction, § 6 (5).

16. *As for me, I will call upon God.* That is, I have no other refuge in my troubles, yet I can go to him, and pour out all the desires of my heart before him. ¶ *And the* LORD *shall save me.* This expresses strong confidence. On the supposition that the psalm refers to the rebellion of Absalom, David was driven from his home, and his throne, and from the house of God,—a poor exile, forsaken by nearly all. But his faith did not fail. He confided in God, and believed that He was able to effect his deliverance, and that He would do it. Rarely can we be placed in circumstances so trying and discouraging as were those of David; never should we, in any circumstances, fail to believe, as he did, that God can deliver us, and that, if we are his friends, we shall be ultimately safe.

17. *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.* In another place (Ps. cxix. 164) the psalmist says that he engaged in acts of devotion seven times in a day. Daniel prayed three times a day, Dan. vi. 10. David went, in his troubles, before God evening, morning, and midday, in solemn, earnest prayer. So Paul, in a time of great distress, gave himself on three set occasions to earnest prayer for deliverance. See Notes on 2 Cor. xii. 8. This verse, therefore, does not *prove* that it was a regular habit of David to pray three times a day; but in view of the passage, it may be remarked (*a*) that it is proper to have regular seasons for devotion, of frequent occurrence; and (*b*) that there are favourable and suitable *times* for devotion. The morning and the evening are obviously appropriate; and it is well to *divide* the day also by prayer,—to seek, at midday, the rest from bodily and mental toil which is secured by communion with God, — and to implore that strength which we need for the remaining duties of the day. True religion is cultivated by *frequent* and REGULAR seasons of devotion. ¶ *And cry aloud.* The word here employed properly means to murmur; to make a humming sound; to sigh; to growl; to groan. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 5. Here the language means that he would give utterance to his deep feelings in appropriate tones—whether words, sighs, or groans. To the deep thoughts and sorrows of his soul he would often give suitable expression before God. ¶ *And he shall hear my voice.* The confident language of faith, as in ver. 16.

18. *He hath delivered my soul in peace.* The Hebrew is, "He has *redeemed*;" so also the Septuagint and Vulgate. The meaning is, He has

against [r] me: for there were many with me.

19 God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. [1] Because they have no changes, [s] therefore they fear not God.

[r] Ps. xviii. 17; cxxiv. 1, 2.

[1] Or, *With whom* also there be *no changes, yet they.* [s] Ps. lxxiii. 5, etc.

rescued me, or has saved me from my enemies. Either the psalmist composed the psalm *after* the struggle was over, and in view of it, here speaks of what had actually occurred; or he is so confident of being redeemed and saved that he speaks of it as if it were already done. See ver. 19. There are many instances in the Psalms in which the writer is so *certain* that what he prays for will be accomplished that he speaks of it as if it had already actually occurred. The words "*in peace*" mean that God had given him peace; or that the result of the Divine interposition was that he had calmness of mind. ¶ *From the battle* that was *against me.* The hostile array; the armies prepared for conflict. ¶ *For there were many with me.* This language conveys to *us* the idea that there were many on his side, or many that were associated with him, and that this was the reason why he was delivered. It is doubtful, however, whether this is the meaning of the original. The idea may be that there were many contending with him; that is, that there were many who were arrayed against him. The Hebrew will admit of this construction.

19. *God shall hear and afflict them.* That is, God will hear my prayer, and will afflict them, or bring upon them deserved judgments. As this looks to the future, it would seem to show that when in the previous verse he uses the past tense, and says that God *had* redeemed him, the language there, as suggested above, is that of strong confidence, implying that he had such certain assurance that the thing would be, that he speaks of it as if it were already done. Here he expresses the same confidence in another form,—his firm belief that God *would* hear his prayer, and would bring upon his enemies deserved punishment. ¶ *Even he that abideth of old.* The eternal God; he who is from everlasting. Literally, "He inhabits antiquity;" that is, he sits enthroned in the most distant past; he is eternal and unchanging. The same God who has heard prayer, will hear it now; he who has always shown himself a just God and an avenger, will show himself the same now. The fact that God is from everlasting, and is unchanging, is the only foundation for our security at any time, and the only ground of success in our plans. To a Being who is always the same we may confidently appeal; for we *know* what he will do. But who could have confidence in a changeable God? Who would know what to expect? Who can make any *calculation* on mere chance? ¶ *Because they have no changes,* &c. Marg., *With whom there be no changes, yet they fear not God.* Literally, "To whom there are no changes, and they fear not God." Prof. Alexander supposes this to mean that God will "hear" the reproaches and blasphemies of those who have no changes, and who, therefore, have no fear of God. The meaning of the original is not exactly expressed in our common version. According to that version, the idea would seem to be that the fact that they meet with no changes or reverses in life, or that they are favoured with uniform prosperity, is a *reason* why they do not fear or worship God. This may be true in fact (comp. Notes on Job xxi. 9–14), but it is not the idea here. The meaning is, that the God who is unchanging—who is always true and just—will "afflict," that is, will bring punishment on those who heretofore have had no changes; who have ex-

20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath [1] broken his covenant.

21 *The words* of his mouth

[1] *profaned.*

perienced no adversities; who are confident of success because they have always been prosperous, and who have no fear of God. Their continual success and prosperity *may* be a reason—as it often is—why they do *not* feel their need of religion, and do *not* seek and serve God; but the precise truth taught here is, that the fact of continued prosperity is no argument for impunity and safety in a course of wrong doing. God is unchangeable *in fact*, as they *seem* to be; and an unchangeable God will not suffer the wicked always to prosper. To constitute safety there must be a better ground of assurance than the mere fact that we have been uniformly prospered, and have experienced no reverses hitherto. ¶ *They fear not God.* They do not regard him. They do not dread his interposition as a just God. How many such there are upon the earth, who argue secretly that because they have always been favoured with success, therefore they are safe; who, in the midst of abundant prosperity,—of unchanging "good fortune," as they would term it,—worship no God, feel no need of religion, and are regardless of the changes of life which may soon occur, and even of that one great change which death must soon produce!

20. *He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him.* Against those who were his friends, or who had given him no occasion for war. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "He hath put forth his hands *in recompensing;*" that is, in taking vengeance. The Hebrew would bear this construction, but the more correct rendering is that in our common version. The *connexion* here would seem to indicate that this is to be referred to God, as God is mentioned in the previous verse. But evidently the design is to refer to the enemies, or the principal enemy of the psalmist,—the man whom he had particularly in his eye in the composition of the psalm; and the language is that of one who was *full* of the subject,—who was thinking of one thing,—and who did not deem it necessary to specify by name the man who had injured him, and whose conduct had so deeply pained him. He, therefore, begins the verse, "*He* hath put forth his hands," etc.; showing that his mind was fixed on the base conduct of his enemy. The language is such as leads us to suppose that the psalmist had Ahithophel in view, as being eminently the man that had in this cruel and unexpected manner put forth his hands against one who was his friend, and who had always treated him with confidence. ¶ *He hath broken his covenant.* He, Ahithophel. The margin, as the Hebrew, is, "*He hath profaned.*" The idea is, that he had defiled, or polluted it; or he had treated it as a vile thing,—a thing to be regarded with contempt and aversion, as a polluted object is. The "covenant" here referred to, according to the views expressed above, may be supposed to refer to the compact or agreement of Ahithophel with David as an officer of his realm—as an adviser and counsellor—that he would be faithful to the interests of the king and to his cause. All this he had disregarded, and had treated as if it were a worthless thing, by identifying himself with Absalom in his rebellion. See 2 Sam. xv. 12, 31.

21. The words *of his mouth were smoother than butter.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "Smooth are the butterings of his mouth." This is in accordance with the Hebrew, but the general meaning is well expressed in our common version. The idea is, that he was a hypocrite; that his professions of friendship were false; that he only used pleasant words—

were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.

t Matt. vi. 25, 30; 1 Pet. v. 7.

22 Cast *t* thy [1] burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he "shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

[1] Or, *gift*. *u* Ps. cxxi. 3.

words expressive of friendship and love—to deceive and betray. We have a similar expression when we speak of *honeyed words*, or *honeyed accents*. This would apply to Ahithophel, and it will apply to thousands of similar cases in the world. ¶ *But war* was *in his heart*. He was base, treacherous, false. He was really my enemy, and was ready, when any suitable occasion occurred, to show himself to be such. ¶ *His words were softer than oil*. Smooth, pleasant, gentle. He was full of professions of love and kindness. ¶ *Yet* were *they drawn swords*. As swords drawn from the scabbard, and ready to be used. Comp. Ps. xxviii. 3; lvii. 4.

22. *Cast thy burden upon the* LORD. This may be regarded as an address of the psalmist to himself, or to his own soul,—an exhortation to himself to roll all his care upon the Lord, and to be calm. It is expressed, however, in so general language, that it may be applicable to all persons in similar circumstances. Comp. Matt. xi. 28, 29; Phil. iv. 6, 7; 1 Pet. v. 7. The Margin here is, *gift*. The *literal* rendering would be, "Cast upon Jehovah what he hath given (or laid upon) thee; that is, thy lot." (Gesenius, *Lex.*) The phrase, "he gives thee," here means what he appoints for thee; what he allots to thee as thy portion; what, in the great distribution of things in his world, he has assigned to *thee* to be done or to be borne;—cast it all on him. Receive the allotment as coming from him; as what *he* has, in his infinite wisdom, assigned to thee as thy portion in this life; as what *he* has judged it to be best that thou shouldest do or bear; as *thy* part of toil, or trouble, or sacrifice, in carrying out his great arrangements in the world. All that is to be *borne* or to be *done* in this world he has *divided up* among men, giving or assigning to each one what He thought best fitted to his ability, his circumstances, his position in life,—what *he* could do or bear best,—and what, therefore, would most conduce to the great end in view. That portion thus assigned to *us*, we are directed to "cast upon the Lord;" that is, we are to look to him to enable us to do or to bear it. As it is *his* appointment, we should receive it, and submit to it, without murmuring; as it is *his* appointment, we may feel assured that no more has been laid upon us than is commensurate with our ability, our condition, our usefulness, our salvation. We have not to re-arrange what has been thus appointed, or to adjust it anew, but to do all, and endure all that he has ordained, leaning on his arm. ¶ *And he shall sustain thee*. He will make you sufficient for it. The word literally means *to measure;* then to hold or contain, as a vessel or measure; and then, to hold up or sustain *by* a sufficiency of strength or nourishment, as life is sustained. Gen. xlv. 11; xlvii. 12; l. 21; 1 Kings iv. 7; xvii. 4. Here it means that God would give such a *measure* of strength and grace as would be adapted to the duty or the trial; or such as would be sufficient to bear us up under it. Comp. Notes on 2 Cor. xii. 9. ¶ *He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*. Literally, *He will not give moving for ever to the righteous*. That is, he will not so appoint, arrange, or permit things to occur, that the righteous shall be *ultimately* and *permanently* removed from their steadfastness and their hope; he will not suffer them to fall away and perish. In all their trials and temptations he will sustain them, and will ultimately bring them off in triumph. The meaning here cannot be that the

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: [1] bloody and deceitful men shall not [2] live out half their days; [v] but I will trust in thee.

[1] *men of bloods and deceit.*

[2] *halve.* [v] Prov. x. 27.

righteous shall never be "moved" in the sense that their circumstances will not be changed; or that none of their plans will fail; or that they will never be disappointed; or that their minds will never in any sense be discomposed; but that whatever trials may come upon them, they will be *ultimately* safe. Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 24.

23. *But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction.* The word "*them*," here evidently refers to the enemies of the psalmist; the wicked men who were arrayed against him, and who sought his life. The "pit of destruction" refers here to the grave, or to death, considered with reference to the fact that they would be *destroyed* or *cut off*, or would not die in the usual course of nature. The meaning is, that God would come forth in his displeasure, and cut them down for their crimes. The word *pit* usually denotes *a well*, or *cavern* (Gen. xiv. 10; xxxvii. 20; Exod. xxi. 34), but is often used to denote the grave (Job xvii. 16; xxxiii. 18, 24; Ps. ix. 15; xxviii. 1; xxx. 3, 9, *et al.*); and the idea here is that they would be cut off for their sins. The word "destruction" is added to denote that this would be by some direct act, or by punishment inflicted by the hand of God. ¶ *Bloody and deceitful men.* Marg., as in Heb., *Men of bloods and deceit.* The allusion is to men of violence; men who live by plunder and rapine; and especially to such men considered as false, unfaithful, and treacherous,—as they commonly are. The special allusion here is to the enemies of David, and particularly to such as Ahithophel,—men who not only sought his life, but who had proved themselves to be treacherous and false to him. ¶ *Shall not live out half their days.* Marg., as in Heb., *shall not halve their days.* So the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. The statement is general, not universal. The meaning is, that they do not live half as long as they might do, and would do, if they were *not* bloody and deceitful. Beyond all question this is true. Such men are either cut off in strife and conflict, in personal affrays in duels, or in battle; or they are arrested for their crimes, and punished by an ignominious death. Thousands and tens of thousands thus die every year, who, *but* for their evil deeds, might have doubled the actual length of their lives; who might have passed onward to old age respected, beloved, happy, useful. There is to all, indeed, an outer limit of life. There is a bound which we cannot pass. That natural limit, however, is one that in numerous cases is much *beyond* what men actually reach, though one to which they *might* have come by a course of temperance, prudence, virtue, and piety. God has fixed a limit beyond which we cannot pass; but, wherever that may be, as arranged in his providence, it is our duty not to cut off our lives *before* that natural limit is reached; or, in other words, it is our duty *to live on the earth just as long as we can.* Whatever makes us come short of this is self-murder, for there is no difference in principle between a man's cutting off his life by the pistol, by poison, or by the halter, and cutting it off by vice, by crime, by dissipation, by the neglect of health, or by those habits of indolence and self-indulgence which undermine the constitution, and bring the body down to the grave. Thousands die each year whose proper record on their graves would be *self-murderers.* Thousands of young men are indulging in habits which, unless arrested, *must* have such a result, and who are destined to an early grave—who will not live out half their days—unless their mode of life is changed, and they be-

come temperate, chaste, and virtuous. One of the ablest lawyers that I have ever known—an example of what often occurs—was cut down in middle life by the use of tobacco. How many thousands perish each year, in a similar manner, by indulgence in intoxicating drinks!

PSALM LVI.

This purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no sufficient reason for doubting the correctness of its being thus attributed to him. De Wette indeed thinks that the contents of the psalm do not well agree with the circumstances of David's life, and especially with that period of his life referred to in the title, and supposes that it was composed by some Hebrew in exile in the time of the Captivity. But this is evidently mere conjecture. There *were* times in the life of David to which all that is said in this psalm would be applicable; and it is not difficult to explain all the allusions in it with reference to the circumstances specified in the title.

On the words "To the chief Musician," see Introd. to Ps. iv. In the expression in the title *upon Jonath-elem-rechokim*, the first word—*Jonath*—means a *dove*, a favourite emblem of suffering innocence; and the second—*elem*—means *silence*, dumbness, sometimes put for uncomplaining submission; and the third—*rechokim*—means *distant* or *remote*, agreeing here with places or persons, probably the latter, in which sense it is applicable to the Philistines, as aliens in blood and religion from the Hebrews. Thus understood, the whole title is an enigmatical description of David as an innocent and uncomplaining sufferer among strangers. See Prof. Alexander. De Wette, however, renders it, "The dove of the far-off terebinth trees." The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "for the people who are made remote from their sanctuary." The common rendering of the phrase is, "Upon, or respecting the dove of silence, in remote places," or "far-off from its nest," or "in distant groves." Gesenius (*Lex.*) renders it, "the silent dove among strangers," and applies it to the people of Israel in the time of the exile, as an uncomplaining, unmurmuring people. This explanation of the *words*, "the silent dove among strangers," is probably the true one; but it is applicable here, not to the people of Israel, as Gesenius, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, render it, but to David, as an exile and a wanderer,—one who was driven away from country and home, as a dove wandering from its nest. Whether it was the title of a "tune" or a piece of music already known, or whether it was music that was composed for this occasion, and with reference to this very psalm, it is not practicable now to determine. It is very *possible* that there was already a piece of music in existence, and in common use, to which this beautiful title of "*A silent dove among strangers*," or "*A patient dove driven from her nest into remote places*," was given,—plaintive, tender, pensive music, and therefore peculiarly appropriate for a psalm composed to describe the feelings of David when driven from home, and compelled to seek a place of safety in a remote region, like a dove driven from its nest. On the meaning of the word *Michtam*, see Notes on the introd. to Psalm xvi. The portion of the title "When the Philistines took him in Gath," evidently refers to the event recorded in 1 Sam. xxi. 10, *et seq.* when David, fleeing from Saul, took refuge in the country of Achish, king of Gath, and when the "servants" of the king of Gath made him known to Achish, whose fears they so aroused as to lead him to drive the stranger away. The words "*took him in Gath*," refer not to their *apprehending* him, or *seizing* him, but to their following him, or overtaking him, to wit, by their calumnies and reproaches, so that he found no safety there. He was persecuted by Saul; he was also persecuted by the Philistines, among whom he sought refuge and safety.

The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. An earnest prayer for the Divine interposition in behalf of the author of the psalm, vers. 1, 2.

II. An expression of his trust in God in times of danger, vers. 3, 4.

III. A description of his enemies:—of their wresting his words; of their evil thoughts against him; of their gathering together; of their watching his steps; of their lying in wait for his life, vers. 5, 6.

IV. His confident belief that they would not escape by their iniquity; that God knew all his wanderings; that God remembered his tears, as if He put them in His bottle; and that his enemies would yet know that God was with him, vers. 7-9.

PSALM LVI.

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, [1] Michtam of David, when [w] the Philistines took him in Gath.

BE merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow [x] me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2 Mine [2] enemies would daily swallow *me* up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High.

3 What time I am afraid, [y] I

[1] Or, *a golden* Psalm *of David*, Ps. xvi. *title.* [w] 1 Sam. xxi. 11; xxix. 4. [x] Hos. viii. 8. [y] 1 Sam. xxx. 6. [2] *observers.*

V. His entire trust in God, and his firm assurance that he would yet be kept from falling, and would walk before God in the light of the living. vers. 10–13.

The general *subject* of the psalm, therefore, is *confidence or trust in God in the time of danger.*

1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* See Notes on Ps. li. 1. ¶ *For man would swallow me up.* The word here used means properly to breathe hard; to pant; to blow hard; and then, to pant after, to yawn after with open mouth. The idea is, that men came upon him everywhere with open mouth, as if they would swallow him down whole. He found no friend in man—in any man. Everywhere his life was sought. There was no *man,* wherever he might go, on whom he could rely, or whom he could trust; and his only refuge, therefore, was in God. ¶ *He fighting daily.* Constantly; without intermission. That is, all men seemed to be at war with him, and to pursue him always. ¶ *Oppresseth me.* Presses hard upon me; so presses on me as always to endanger my life, and so that I feel no security anywhere.

2. *Mine enemies.* Marg., *mine observers.* The Hebrew word here used means properly to twist, to twist together; then, to be firm, hard, tough; then, *to press together,* as a rope that is twisted,—and hence the idea of oppressing, or pressing hard on one, as an enemy. See Ps. xxvii. 11; liv. 5. In the former verse the psalmist spoke of *an* enemy, or of *one* that would swallow him up (in the singular number), or of *man* as an enemy to him anywhere. Here he uses the plural number, implying that there were *many* who were enlisted against him. He was surrounded by enemies. He met them wherever he went. He had an enemy in Saul; he had enemies in the followers of Saul; he had enemies among the Philistines, and now when he had fled to Achish, king of Gath, and had hoped to find a refuge and a friend there, he found only bitter foes. ¶ *Would daily swallow me up.* Constantly; their efforts to do it are unceasing. A new day brings no relief to me, but every day I am called to meet some new form of opposition. ¶ *For* they be *many that fight against me.* His own followers and friends were few; his foes were many. Saul had numerous followers, and David encountered foes wherever he went. ¶ *O thou Most High.* The word here used — מָרוֹם, *marom* — means properly height, altitude, elevation; then, a high place, especially heaven, Ps. xviii. 16; Isa. xxiv. 18, 21; then it is applied to anything high or inaccessible, as a fortress, Isa. xxvi. 5. It is supposed by Gesenius (*Lex.*), and some others, to mean here *elation of mind, pride,*—implying that his enemies fought against him with elated minds, or proudly. So the LXX, the Vulgate, and Luther render it; and so De Wette understands it. Yet it seems most probable that our translators have given the correct rendering, and that the passage is a solemn appeal to God as more exalted than his foes, and as one, therefore, in whom he could put entire confidence. Comp. Ps. xcii. 8; xciii. 4; Micah vi. 6.

3. *What time I am afraid.* Literally, *the day I am afraid.* David did not hesitate to admit that there were times when he was afraid. He saw

will trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: [z] I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

5 Every day they wrest my words: [a] all their thoughts *are* against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves to-

[z] Luke xii. 4, 5. [a] Luke xi. 54.

himself to be in danger, and he had apprehensions as to the result. There is a natural fear of danger and of death; a fear implanted in us—(*a*) to make us cautious, and (*b*) to induce us to put our trust in God as a Preserver and Friend. Our very nature—our physical constitution—is full of arrangements most skilfully adjusted, and most wisely planted there, to lead us to God as our Protector. Fear is one of these things, designed to make us feel that we *need* a God, and to lead us to him when we realize that we have no power to save ourselves from impending dangers. ¶ *I will trust in thee.* As one that is able to save, and one that will order all things as they should be ordered. It is only this that can make the mind calm in the midst of danger:—(*a*) the feeling that God *can* protect us and save us from danger, and that he *will* protect us if he sees fit; (*b*) the feeling that whatever may be the result, whether life or death, it will be such as God sees to be best,—if *life*, that we may be useful, and glorify his name yet upon the earth; if *death*, that it will occur not because he had not *power* to interpose and save, but because there were good and sufficient reasons why he should *not* put forth his power on that occasion and rescue us. Of this we may be, however, assured, that God has *power* to deliver us always, and that if not delivered from calamity it is not because he is inattentive, or has not power. And of this higher truth also we may be assured always, that he has power to save us from that which we have most occasion to fear—a dreadful hell. It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment,—"*What time I am afraid,* I WILL TRUST IN THEE."

4. *In God I will praise his word.* The meaning of this seems to be, "In reference to God—or, in my trust on God—I will especially have respect to his *word*—his gracious promise; I will make that the special object of my praise. In dwelling in my own mind on the Divine perfections; in finding there materials for praise, I will have special respect to his revealed truth—to what he has *spoken* as an encouragement to me. I will be thankful that he *has* spoken, and that he has given me assurances on which I may rely in the times of danger." The idea is, that he would *always* find in God that which was the ground or foundation for praise; and that that which called for *special* praise in meditating on the Divine character, was the *word* or *promise* which God had made to his people. ¶ *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* What man can do to me. Comp. Notes on Matt. x. 28; Rom. viii. 31–34; Heb. xiii. 6.

5. *Every day they wrest my words.* The word here rendered *wrest,* means literally to give pain, to grieve, to afflict; and it is here used in the sense of *wresting*, as if force were applied to words; that is, they are *tortured,* twisted, perverted. We have the same use of the word *torture* in our language. This they did by affixing a meaning to his words which he never intended, so as to injure him. ¶ *All their thoughts* are *against me for evil.* All their plans, devices, purposes. They never seek my good, but always seek to do me harm.

6. *They gather themselves together.* That is, they do not attack me singly, but they unite their forces; they com-

gether, they hide themselves, they mark [b] my steps, when they wait for my soul.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? [c] in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle; *are they* not in [d] thy book?

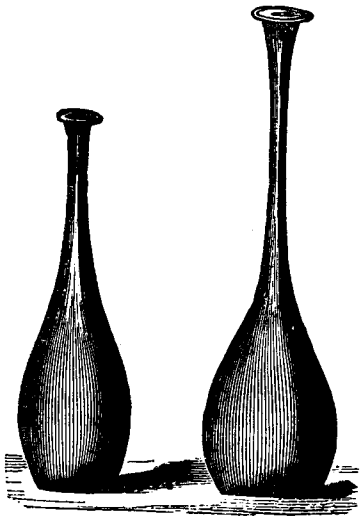
[b] Ps. xxxvii. 32. [c] Ec. viii. 13. [d] Mal. iii. 16.

bine against me. ¶ *They hide themselves.* They lurk in ambush. They do not come upon me openly, but they conceal themselves in places where they cannot be seen, that they may spring upon me suddenly. ¶ *They mark my steps.* They watch me whatever I do. They keep a spy upon me, so that I can never be sure that I am not observed. ¶ *When they wait for my soul.* As they watch for my life; or, as they watch for opportunities to take away my life. I am never secure; I know not at what time, or in what manner, they may spring upon me. This would apply to David when he fled to Achish, king of Gath; when he was driven away by him; and when he was watched and pursued by Saul and his followers as he fled into the wilderness. 1 Sam. xxi; xxii.

7. *Shall they escape by iniquity?* This expression in the original is very obscure. There is in the Hebrew no mark of interrogation; and a literal rendering would be, "By iniquity [there is] escape to them;" and, according to this, the sense would be, that they contrived to escape from just punishment by their sins; by the boldness of their crimes; by their wicked arts. The LXX. render it, "As I have suffered this for my life, thou wilt on no account save them." Luther, "What they have done evil, that is already forgiven." De Wette reads it, as in our translation, as a question: "Shall their deliverance be in wickedness?" Probably this is the true idea. The psalmist asks with earnestness and amazement whether, under the Divine administration, men *can* find safety in mere wickedness; whether great crimes constitute an evidence of security; whether his enemies owed their apparent safety to the fact that they were so eminently wicked. He prays, therefore, that God would interfere, and show that this was not, and could not be so. ¶ *In* thine *anger cast down the people, O God.* That is, show by thine own interposition—by the infliction of justice—by preventing the success of their plans—by discomfiting them—that under the Divine administration wickedness does *not* constitute security; in other words, that thou art a just God, and that wickedness is not a passport to thy favour.

8. *Thou tellest my wanderings.* Thou dost *number* or *recount* them; that is, in thy own mind. Thou dost keep an account of them; thou dost notice me as I am driven from one place to another to find safety. "*My wanderings,*"—to Gath, 1 Sam. xxi. 10; to the cave of Adullam, 1 Sam. xxii. 1; to Mizpeh, in Moab, 1 Sam. xxii. 3; to the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5; to Keilah, 1 Sam. xxiii. 5; to the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 14; to the wilderness of Maon, 1 Sam. xxiii. 25; to En-gedi, 1 Sam. xxiv. 1, 2. ¶ *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* The tears which I shed in my wanderings. Let them not fall to the ground and be forgotten. Let them be remembered by thee as if they were gathered up and placed in a bottle—*a lachrymatory*—that they may be brought to remembrance hereafter. The word here rendered *bottle* means properly a bottle made of skin, such as was used in the East; but it may be employed to denote a bottle of any kind. It is possible, and, indeed, it seems probable, that there is an allusion here to the custom of collecting tears shed in a time of calamity and sorrow, and preserving them in a small bottle or "*lachrymatory,*" as a memorial of the grief. The Romans had a custom, that in a time of mourning—on a

funeral occasion—a friend went to one in sorrow, and wiped away the tears from the eyes with a piece of



TEAR-BOTTLES.

cloth, and squeezed the tears into a small bottle of glass or earth, which was carefully preserved as a memorial of friendship and sorrow. Many of these lachrymatories have been found in the ancient Roman tombs. I myself saw a large quantity of them in the *Columbaria* at Rome, and in the Capitol, among the relics and curiosities of the place. The above engraving will illustrate the form of *these* lachrymatories. The annexed remarks of Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 147), will show that the same custom prevailed in the East, and will describe the forms of the "tear-bottles" that were used *there*:—"These lachrymatories are still found in great numbers on opening ancient tombs. A sepulchre lately discovered in one of the gardens of our city had scores of them in it. They are made of thin glass, or more generally of simple pottery, often not even baked or glazed, with a slender body, a broad bottom, and a funnel-shaped top. They have nothing in them but *dust* at present. If the friends were expected to contribute their share of tears for these bottles, they would very much need cunning women to cause their eyelids to gush out with water. These forms of ostentatious sorrow have ever been offensive to sensible people. Thus Tacitus says, 'At my funeral let no tokens of sorrow be seen, no pompous mockery of woe. Crown me with chaplets, strew flowers on my grave, and let my friends erect no vain memorial to tell where my remains are lodged.'"



LACHRYMATORIES.

¶ Are they *not in thy book?* In thy book of remembrance; are they not numbered and recorded so that they will not be forgotten? This expresses strong confidence that his tears *would* be remembered; that they would not

9 When I cry *unto thee,* then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for [e] God *is* for me.
10 In God will I praise *his* word; in the LORD will I praise *his* word.
11 In God have I put my trust:

[e] Rom. viii. 31.

be forgotten. All the tears that we shed *are* remembered by God. If *properly* shed—shed in sorrow, without murmuring or complaining, they will be remembered for our good; if *improperly* shed—if with the spirit of complaining, and with a want of submission to the Divine will, they will be remembered against us. But it is not wrong to weep. David wept; the Saviour wept; nature prompts us to weep; and it cannot be wrong to weep if *our eye "poureth out" its tears "unto God"* (Job xvi. 20); that is, if in our sorrow we look to God with submission and with earnest supplication.

9. *When I cry* unto thee. This expresses strong confidence in prayer. The psalmist felt that he had only to cry unto God, to secure the overthrow of his enemies. God had all power, and his power would be put forth in answer to prayer. ¶ *Then shall mine enemies turn back.* Then shall they cease to pursue and persecute me. He did not doubt that this would be the ultimate result,—that this blessing would be conferred, though it might be delayed, and though his faith and patience might be greatly tried. ¶ *For God* is *for me.* He is on my side; and he is with me in my wanderings. Comp. Notes on Rom. viii. 31.

10. *In God will I praise* his *word.* Luther renders this, "I will praise the word of God." The phrase "in God" means probably "in respect to God;" or, "in what pertains to God." That which he would *particularly* praise or celebrate in respect to God, —that which called for the most decided expressions of praise and gratitude, was his "*word,*" his promise, his revealed truth. So in Ps. cxxxviii. 2, "Thou hast magnified thy *word* above all thy name;" that is, above all the other manifestations of thyself. The allusion in the passage here is to what God had *spoken* to David, or the *promise* which he had made,—the declaration of his gracious purposes in regard to him. Amidst all the perfections of Deity, and all which God had done for him, this now seemed to him to have special pre-eminence in his praises. The *word* of God was to him that which impressed his mind most deeply,—that which most tenderly affected his heart. There are times when *we* feel this, and properly feel it; times when, in the contemplation of the Divine perfections and dealings, our minds so rest on his word, on his truth, on what he has revealed, on his gracious promises, on the disclosures of a plan of redemption, on the assurance of a heaven hereafter, on the instructions which he has given us about himself and his plans—about ourselves, our duty, and our prospects, that this absorbs all our thoughts, and we feel that this is *the* great blessing for which we are to be thankful; this, *the* great mercy for which we are to praise him. What would the life of man be without the Bible! What a dark, gloomy, sad course would ours be on earth if we had nothing to guide us to a better world! ¶ *In the* LORD *will I praise* his *word.* In *Jehovah.* That is, whether I contemplate God in the usual name by which he is known—*Elohim* (Heb.)—or by that more sacred name which he has assumed—*Jehovah* (Heb.)—that which seems now to me to lay the foundation of loftiest praise and most hearty thanksgiving, is that he has *spoken* to men, and made known his will in his revealed truth.

11. *In God have I put my trust.* The sentiment in this verse is the same as in ver. 6, except that the word "*man*" is used here instead of "flesh." The meaning, however, is

I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

12 Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death; *wilt* not *thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

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the same. The idea is, that he would not be afraid of what *any man*—any human being—could do to him, if God was his friend.

12. *Thy vows* are *upon me, O God.* The word *vow* means something promised; some obligation under which we have voluntarily brought ourselves. It differs from duty, or obligation in general, since that is the result of the Divine command, while this is an obligation arising from the fact that we have *voluntarily* taken it upon ourselves. The extent of *this* obligation, therefore, is measured by the nature of the promise or vow which we have made; and God will hold us responsible for carrying out our vows. Such voluntary obligations or vows were allowable, as an expression of thanksgiving, or as a means of exciting to a more strict religious service, under the Mosaic dispensation (Gen. xxviii. 20; Num. vi. 2; xxx. 2, 3; Deut. xxiii. 21; 1 Sam. i. 11); and they cannot be wrong under any dispensation. They are not of the nature of *merit*, or works of supererogation, but they are (*a*) a *means* of bringing the obligations of religion to bear upon us more decidedly, and (*b*) a proper expression of gratitude. Such vows are those which all persons take upon themselves when they make a profession of religion; and when such a profession of religion is made, it should be a constant reflection on our part, that "the vows of God are upon us," or that we have voluntarily consecrated all that we have to God. David had made such a vow (*a*) in his general purpose to lead a religious life; (*b*) very probably in some specific act or promise that he would devote himself to God if he would deliver him, or as an expression of his gratitude for deliverance. Comp. Notes on Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 23, 24. ¶ *I will render praises unto thee.* Literally, "I will *recompense* praises unto thee;" that is, I will *pay* what I have vowed, or I will faithfully perform my vows.

13. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death.* That is, my *life.* Thou hast kept *me* from death. He was surrounded by enemies. He was pursued by them from place to place. He had been, however, graciously delivered from these dangers, and had been kept alive. Now he gratefully remembers this mercy, and confidently appeals to God to interpose still further, and keep him from stumbling. ¶ Wilt *not* thou deliver *my feet from falling.* This *might* be rendered, "Hast thou not delivered;" thus carrying forward the thought just before expressed. So the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther and De Wette render it. The Hebrew, however, will admit of the translation in our common version, and such a petition would be an appropriate close of the psalm. Thus understood, it would be the recognition of dependence on God; the expression of gratitude for his former mercies; the utterance of a desire to honour him always; the acknowledgment of the fact that God only could keep him; and the manifestation of a wish that he might be enabled to live and act as in His presence. The word here rendered "falling" means usually a *thrusting* or *casting down*, as by violence. The prayer is, that he might be kept amid the dangers of his way; or that God would uphold him so that he might still honour Him. ¶ *That I may walk before God.* As in his presence; enjoying his friendship and favour. ¶ *In the light of the living.* See Notes on Job xxxiii. 30. The grave is represented everywhere in the Scriptures as a region of darkness (see Notes on Job x. 21, 22; comp. Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; Isa. xxxviii. 11, 18, 19),

PSALM LVII.

To the chief Musician, [1] Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when *f* he fled from Saul in the cave.

[1] Or, *Destroy not, A golden* Psalm.

BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my

f Ps. cxlii., *title*; 1 Sam. xxii. 1.

and this world as light. The prayer, therefore, is, that he might continue to live, and that he might enjoy the favour of God: a prayer always proper for man, whatever his rank or condition.

PSALM LVII.

This is another psalm which purports to be a psalm of David. The propriety of ascribing it to him cannot be called in question. It is addressed to "the chief Musician" (see Notes to Introd. of Ps. iv.). Though relating to an individual case, and to the particular trials of an individual, yet it had much in it that would be appropriate to the condition of others in similar circumstances, and it contained, moreover, such general sentiments on the subject of religion, that it would be useful to the people of God in all ages. The expression in the title, *Al-taschith*, rendered in the margin, *Destroy not*, and by the Septuagint, μὴ διαφθείρῃς (*destroy not*), and in the same manner in the Latin Vulgate, occurs also in the titles of the two following psalms, and of the seventy-fifth. It is regarded by some as a musical expression,—and by others as the first words of some well-known poem or hymn, in order to show that this psalm was to be set to the music which was employed in using that poem; or, as we should say, that the *tune* appropriate to that was also appropriate to this, so that the words would at once suggest the tune, in the same manner as the Latin designations *De Profundis*, *Miserere*, *Non Nobis Domine*, *Te Deum*, etc., indicate well-known tunes as pieces of music,—the tunes to which the hymns beginning with those words are always sung. The author of the Chaldee Paraphrase regards this psalm as belonging to that period of David's history when he was under a constant necessity of using language of this nature, or of saying "*Destroy not*," and as therefore suited to all similar emergencies. The language seems to be derived from the prayer of Moses, Deut. ix. 26; "I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, *destroy not* thy people," etc. This very expression is found in 1 Sam. xxvi. 9, in a command which David addressed to his followers, and it *may* have been a common expression with him.—On the meaning of the word *Michtam* in the title, see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. xvi. It is found in the three following psalms—in the two former of them, in connexion with the phrase *Al-taschith*, showing that probably those psalms had reference to the same period of David's life. ¶ *When he fled from Saul in the cave.* Possibly the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1), or that of En-gedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 1-3). Or, the word may be used in a *general* sense as referring not to any *particular* cave, but to that period of his life when he was compelled to flee from one place to another for safety, and when his home was *often* in caves.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. An earnest prayer of the suffering and persecuted man, with a full expression of confidence that God would hear him, vers. 1-3.

II. A description of his enemies, as men that resembled lions; men, whose souls were inflamed and infuriated; men, whose teeth were like spears and arrows, ver. 4.

III. The expression of a desire that God might be exalted and honoured, or that all these events might result in his honour and glory, ver. 5.

IV. A further description of the purposes of his enemies, as men who had prepared a net to take him, or had digged a pit into which he might fall, but which he felt assured was a pit into which they themselves would fall, ver. 6.

V. A joyful and exulting expression of confidence in God; an assurance that he would interpose for him; a determination to praise and honour him; a desire that God might be exalted above the heaven, and that his glory might fill all the earth,—forgetting his own particular troubles, and pouring out the desire of his heart that *God* might be honoured whatever might occur to *him*.

1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* The same beginning as the former psalm, —a cry for mercy;—an overwhelming sense of trouble and danger leading him to come at once to the throne of

soul trusteth in thee: yea, in [g] the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.

2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me [1] *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul *is* among lions; *and* I lie *even among* them that are

[g] Ps. lxiii. 7.

[1] Or, *he reproacheth.*

God for help. See Notes on Ps. lvi. 1. ¶ *For my soul trusteth in thee.* See Notes on Ps. lvi. 3. He had nowhere else to go; there was no one on whom he could rely but God. ¶ *Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.* Under the protection or covering of his wings, — as young birds seek protection under the wings of the parent bird. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. Comp. Ps. xxxvi. 7. ¶ *Until* these *calamities be overpast.* Comp. Notes on Job xiv. 13; Ps. xxvii. 13; also on Isa. xxvi. 20. He believed that these calamities *would* pass away, or would cease; that a time would come when he would not thus be driven from place to place. At present he knew that he was in danger, and he desired the Divine protection, for under *that* protection he would be safe.

2. *I will cry unto God most high.* The idea is,—God is exalted above all creatures; all events are *under* him, and he can control them. The appeal was not to man, however exalted; not to an angel, however far he may be above man; it was an appeal made at once to the Supreme Being, the God to whom all worlds and all creatures are subject, and under whose protection, therefore, he must be safe. ¶ *Unto God that performeth* all things *for me.* The word here used, and rendered *performeth* — גָּמַר, *gamar*—means properly to bring to an end; to complete; to perfect. The idea here is, that it is the character of God, that he *completes* or *perfects,* or brings to a happy issue all his plans. The psalmist had had experience of that in the past. God had done this in former trials; he felt assured that God would do it in this; and he, therefore, came to God with a confident belief that all would be safe in his hands.

3. *He shall send from heaven.* That is, from himself; or, he will interpose to save me. The psalmist does not say *how* he expected this interposition,—whether by an angel, by a miracle, by tempest or storm, but he felt that help was to come from God alone, and he was sure that it *would* come. ¶ *And save me* from *the reproach,* etc. This would be more correctly rendered, "He shall save me; he shall reproach him that would swallow me up." So it is rendered in the margin. On the word rendered "would swallow me up," see Notes on Ps. lvi. 1. The idea here is, that God would *rebuke* or *reproach,* to wit, by overthrowing him that sought to devour or destroy him. God had interposed formerly in his behalf (ver. 2), and he felt assured that he would do it again. ¶ *Selah.* This seems here to be a mere musical pause. It has no connexion with the sense. See Notes on Ps. iii. 2. ¶ *God shall send forth his mercy.* In saving me. He will *manifest* his mercy. ¶ *And his truth.* His fidelity to his promise; his faithfulness to those who put their trust in him. He will show himself *true* to all the promises which he has made. Comp. Ps. xl. 11.

4. *My soul* is *among lions.* That is, among men who resemble lions; men, fierce, savage, ferocious. ¶ And *I lie* even among *them that are set on fire.* We have a term of similar import in common use now, when we say that one is *inflamed* with passion, referring to one who is infuriated and enraged. So we speak of *burning*

set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue [h] a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net [i] for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.

7 My heart is [1] fixed, O God,

[h] Ps. lii. 2. [i] Mic. vii. 2. [1] Or, *prepared*.

with rage or wrath—an expression derived, perhaps, from the inflamed *appearance* of a man in anger. The idea here is not that he *would* lie down calmly among those persons, as Prof. Alexander suggests, but that he actually *did* thus lie down. When he laid himself down at night, when he sought repose in sleep, he was surrounded by such persons, and seemed to be sleeping in the midst of them. ¶ Even *the sons of men.* Yet they are not wild beasts, but *men* who seem to have the ferocious nature of wild beasts. The phrase, "sons of men," is often used to denote men themselves. ¶ *Whose teeth* are *spears and arrows.* Spears and arrows in their hands are what the teeth of wild beasts are. ¶ *And their tongue a sharp sword.* The mention of the tongue here has reference, probably, to the abuse and slander to which he was exposed, and which was like a sharp sword that pierced even to the seat of life. See Notes on Ps. lv. 21.

5. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* Comp. Ps. viii. 1. The language here is that of a man who in trouble lifts his thoughts to God; who feels that God reigns; who is assured in his own soul that all things are under his hand; and who is desirous that God should be magnified whatever may become of himself. His prime and leading wish is not for himself, for his own safety, for his own deliverance from danger; it is that *God* may be honoured,—that the name of God may be glorified,—that God may be regarded as supreme over all things,—that God may be exalted in the highest possible degree—an idea expressed in the prayer that he may be exalted *above the heavens.* ¶ Let *thy glory* be *above all the earth.* The honour of thy name; thy praise. Let it be regarded, and be in fact, *above* all that pertains to this lower world; let everything on earth, or that pertains to earth, be subordinate to thee, or be surrendered for thee. This was the comfort which David found in trouble. And this *is* the only true source of consolation. The welfare of the universe depends on God; and that God should be true, and just, and good, and worthy of confidence and love,—that he should reign,—that his law should be obeyed,—that his plans should be accomplished,—is of more importance to the universe than anything that merely pertains to us; than the success of any of our own plans; than our health, our prosperity, or our life.

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps.* A net for my goings; or, into which I may fall. See Notes on Ps. ix. 15. ¶ *My soul is bowed down.* The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther render this in the plural, and in the active form: "They have bowed down my soul;" that is, they have caused my soul to be bowed down. The Hebrew may be correctly rendered, "he pressed down my soul,"—referring to his enemies, and speaking of them in the singular number. ¶ *They have digged a pit before me,* etc. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15, 16; ix. 15; Job v. 13.

7. *My heart is fixed, O God.* Marg., as in Heb., *prepared.* Comp. Notes on Ps. li. 10. The word *fitted* or *prepared* accurately expresses the sense of the Hebrew, and it is so rendered in the Septuagint (ἑτοίμη); in the Vulgate, *paratum;* and by Luther, *bereit.* The word is used, however, in the sense of *standing*

my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake up, my glory; awake, [k] psaltery and harp; I *myself* will awake early.

9 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations.

k Ps. cviii. 1—5.

erect, Ps. ix. 7; to *establish* or *strengthen*, Ps. lxxxix. 4; x. 17; and hence, to be erect; to be firm, steady, constant, fixed. This seems to be the meaning here, as it is expressed in our common version. His heart was firm and decided. He did not waver in his purpose, or lean now to one side and then to the other; he was not *swayed* or *moved* by the events that had occurred. He felt conscious of standing firm in the midst of all his troubles. He confided in God. He did not doubt his justice, his goodness, his mercy; and, even in his trials, he was ready to praise him, and was *resolved* to praise him. The repetition of the word *fixed* gives emphasis and intensity to the expression, and is designed to show in the strongest manner that his heart, his purpose, his confidence in God, did not waver in the slightest degree. ¶ *I will sing and give praise.* My heart shall confide in thee; my lips shall utter the language of praise. In all his troubles God was his refuge; in all, he found occasion for praise. So it should be the fixed and settled purpose of our hearts that we will at all times confide in God, and that in every situation in life we will render him praise.

8. *Awake up, my glory.* By the word *glory* here some understand the tongue; others understand the soul itself, as the glory of man. The *word* properly refers to that which is weighty, or important; then, anything valuable, splendid, magnificent. Here it seems to refer to all that David regarded as glorious and honourable in himself,—his noblest powers of soul,—all in him that *could* be employed in the praise of God. The occasion was one on which it was proper to call all his powers into exercise; all that was noble in him as a man. The words *awake up* are equivalent to *arouse*;—a solemn appeal to put forth all the powers of the soul. ¶ *Awake, psaltery and harp.* In regard to these instruments, see Notes on Isa. v. 12. The instrument denoted by the word *psaltery*—נֵבֶל, *nebel*—was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2. The *harp* or *lyre*—כִּנּוֹר, *kinnor*—was also a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. From 1 Sam. xvi. 23; xviii. 10; xix. 9, it appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers. ¶ *I* myself *will awake early.* That is, I will awake early in the morning to praise God; I will arouse myself from slumber to do this; I will devote the first moments —the early morning—to his worship. These words do not imply that this was an evening psalm, and that he would awake on the morrow—the next day—to praise God; but they refer to what he intended should be his general habit,—that he would devote the early morning (arousing himself for that purpose) to the praise of God. No time in the day is more appropriate for worship than the early morning; no object is more worthy to rouse us from our slumbers than a desire to praise God; in no way can the day be more appropriately begun than by prayer and praise; and nothing will conduce more to keep up the flame of piety —the life of religion in the soul— than the habit of devoting the early morning to the worship of God; to prayer; to meditation; to praise.

9. *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* So great a deliverance as he here hoped for, would

10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

PSALM LVIII.

To the chief Musician, [1] Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye

[1] Or, *Destroy not, A golden* Psalm *of David.*

make it proper that he should celebrate the praise of God in the most public manner; that he should make his goodness known as far as possible among the nations. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 49.

10. *For thy mercy* is *great unto the heavens,* etc. See this explained in the Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 5.

11. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* See Notes on ver. 5. The sentiment here is repeated as being that on which the mind of the psalmist was intensely fixed; that which he most earnestly desired; that which was the crowning aim and desire of his life.

PSALM LVIII.

This psalm is also inscribed as a psalm of David. Both the title and the contents agree in fixing the time of its composition, and the occasion, as being the same as in the two previous psalms. Knapp indeed refers it to the time of Absalom, and De Wette supposes that it was composed in the time of the Babylonish captivity. But there is no reason for departing from the supposition that the title is correct. There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with the supposition that it was composed by David, and in the time of the persecutions under Saul. On the meaning of the expression in the title, "*To the chief Musician,*" see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv. On the phrase "*Al-taschith,*" see Introd. to Ps. lvii. On the word "*Michtam,*" see Introd to Ps. xvi.

The psalm consists of three parts:—

I. A description of the enemies of the psalmist, suggesting a *general* description of the character of the wicked, vers. 1–5. The psalmist, by an emphatic *question* impliedly affirms that those whom he referred to were wicked and false (vers. 1, 2); and this leads him to a general reflection on the character of wicked men; (*a*) as estranged from the womb; (*b*) as going astray as soon as they are born; (*c*) as resembling the serpent injecting deadly poison; and (*d*) as deaf to all appeals of conscience, virtue, and religion—like an adder that will not listen to the voice of the charmer, vers. 3–5.

II. A prayer that God would interpose and deal with them as they deserved, vers. 6–9. This prayer is expressed in different illustrations:—(*a*) by comparing them with lions, and praying that their teeth might be broken out, ver. 6; (*b*) by comparing them with water, and praying that they might disappear as waters flow off, ver. 7; (*c*) by comparing them with a snail, and praying that they might be dissolved, and pass away as a snail appears to do, ver. 8; (*d*) by comparing them with the untimely birth of a woman, that is cast away, ver. 8; (*e*) by comparing them with a pot which is made to feel the heat of thorns on fire, and made to boil quickly, —praying that God would take them away before even that could be done, ver. 9.

III. The exultation of the righteous at such a result, vers. 10–11. (*a*) They would rejoice at the deliverance, ver. 10; (*b*) they would see that God is a righteous God; that he is not a friend of wickedness, but that he regards the cause of truth; that there is in fact a just moral government in the world; that there is a God who is a judge in the earth, ver. 11.

1. *Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?* Luther renders this, "Are you then dumb, that you will not speak what is right, and judge what is proper, ye children of men?" The meaning of the verse is exceedingly obscure; but probably the whole sense of the psalm turns on it. The word rendered *righteousness,* אֵלֶם, *elem*—occurs only in this place and in the title to Ps. lvi., "Jonath-*elem*-rechokim." See Notes on that title. The word properly means *dumbness, silence.* Gesenius (*Lex.*) renders it here, "Do ye indeed decree dumb justice?" *i.e.,* "Do ye really at

judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

2 Yea, in heart [l] ye work wickedness: ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

[l] Ps. xxi. 11.

length decree justice, which so long has seemed dumb?" Professor Alexander renders it, "Are ye indeed dumb when ye should speak righteousness?" The allusion is clearly to some public act of judging; to a judicial sentence; to magistrates and rulers; to men who *should* give a righteous sentence; to those in authority who *ought* to pronounce a just opinion on the conduct of others. The *fact* in the case on which the appeal is made seems to have been that they did *not* do this; that their conduct was wicked and perverse; that no reliance could be placed on their judicial decisions. Rosenmüller renders it, "There is, in fact, silence of justice;" that is, justice is not declared or spoken. Perhaps the meaning of the phrase may be thus expressed: "Is there truly a dumbness or silence of justice when ye speak? do you judge righteously, O ye sons of men?" That is, "You indeed speak; you do declare an opinion; you pronounce a sentence; but *justice* is, in fact, *dumb* or *silent* when you do it. There is no correct or just judgment in the matter. The opinion which is declared is based on error, and has its origin in a wicked heart." There is no expression in the original to answer to the words "O congregation" in our translation, unless it is the word אֵלֶם (*elem*), which never has this signification. It is not so rendered in any of the versions. It is not easy to determine *who* is referred to by this question. It cannot be, as is implied in our common version, that it is to any "*congregation*," any people gathered together for the purpose of pronouncing judgment. Yet it is evidently a reference to some persons, or classes of persons, who were expected to *judge*, or to whom it appertained to pass judgment; and the most natural supposition is that the reference is to the rulers of the nation,—to Saul, and the heads of the government. If the supposition is correct that the psalm was composed, like Ps. lvi., lvii., lix., in the time of the Sauline persecutions, and that it belongs to the same *group* of psalms, then it would have reference to Saul and to those who were associated with him in persecuting David. The subject of the psalm would then be the unjust judgments which they passed on him in treating him as an enemy of the commonwealth; in regarding him as an outlaw, and in driving him from his places of refuge as if hunting him down like a wild beast. The contents of the psalm well accord with this explanation. ¶ *Do ye judge uprightly?* Do you judge right things? are your judgments in accordance with truth and justice? ¶ *O ye sons of men.* Perhaps referring to the fact that in their judgments they showed that they were men—influenced by the common passions of men; in other words, they showed that they could not, in forming their judgments, rise above the corrupt passions and prejudices which usually influence and sway mankind.

2. *Yea, in heart ye work wickedness.* Whatever might be the outward appearances, whatever pretences they might make to just judgment, yet in fact their hearts were set on wickedness, and they were conscious of doing wrong. ¶ *Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.* It is difficult to attach any meaning to this language; the translators evidently felt that they could not express the meaning of the original; and they, therefore, gave what seems to be a literal translation of the Hebrew. The Septuagint renders it, "In heart you work iniquity in the land; your hands weave together iniquity." The Latin Vulgate: "In heart you work iniquity; in the land your hands prepare injustice." Luther: "Yea, willingly do you work iniquity in the

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray [1] as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

[1] *from the belly.*

land, and go straight through to work evil with your hands." Professor Alexander: "In the land, the violence of your hands ye weigh." Perhaps the true translation of the whole verse would be, "Yea, in heart ye work iniquity in the land; ye weigh [weigh out] the violence of your hands;" that is, the deeds of violence or wickedness which your hands commit. The idea of *weighing* them, or *weighing them out*, is derived from the administration of justice. In all lands men are accustomed to speak of *weighing out* justice; to symbolize its administration by scales and balances; and to express the doing of it as holding an even balance. Comp. Notes on Job xxxi. 6; Dan. v. 27; Rev. vi. 5. Thus interpreted, this verse refers, as ver. 1, to the act of pronouncing judgment; and the idea is that instead of pronouncing a just judgment—of holding an equal balance—they determined in favour of violence,—of acts of oppression and wrong to be committed by their own hands. That which they weighed out, or dispensed, was not a just sentence, but violence, wrong, injustice, crime.

3. *The wicked are estranged from the womb.* The allusion here undoubtedly is to the persons principally referred to in the psalm—the enemies of David. But their conduct towards him suggests a more general reflection in regard to *all* the wicked as having the same characteristics. The psalmist, therefore, instead of confining his remarks to them, makes his observations general, on the principle that all wicked men have essentially the same character, and especially in respect to the thing here affirmed, that they go astray early; that they are apostate and alienated from God from their very birth. The words, *the wicked*, here do not necessarily refer to the whole human family (though what is thus affirmed is true of all the human race), but to men who in their lives develop a wicked character; and the affirmation in regard to them is that they go astray early in life—from their very infancy. Strictly speaking, therefore, it cannot be shown that the psalmist in this declaration had reference to the whole human race, or that he meant to make a universal declaration in regard to man as being early estranged or alienated from God; and the passage, therefore, cannot directly, and with exact propriety, be adduced to prove the doctrine that "original sin" appertains to all the race,—whatever may be true on that point. If, however, it is demonstrated from *other* passages, and from facts, that all men *are* "wicked" or depraved, then the assertion here becomes a proof that this is from the womb—from their very birth—that they begin life with a propensity to evil—and that all their subsequent acts are but developments of the depravity or corruption with which they are born. It is only, therefore, after it is proved that men *are* depraved or "wicked," that this passage can be cited in favour of the doctrine of original sin. The word rendered *are estranged*—זָרוּ, *zoru* — means properly, *to go off, to turn aside*, or *away, to depart;* and then it comes to mean *to be strange*, or *a stranger*. The proper idea in the word is that one is a stranger, or a foreigner, and the word would be properly applied to one of another tribe or nation, like the Latin *hostis*, and the Greek ξείνος. Exod. xxx. 33; Isa. i. 7; xxv. 2; xxix. 5; Ps. xliv. 20. The meaning of the term as thus explained is, that, from earliest childhood, they are *as if* they belonged to another people than the people of God; they manifest another spirit; they are governed by other principles than those which pertain to the righteous. Comp. Eph. ii. 19. Their first indications of character are not those of the children of God, but are *alien, strange, hostile*

4 Their [m] poison *is* [1] like the poison of a serpent; *they are* like the deaf [2] adder *that* stoppeth her ear;

[m] Rom. iii. 13.

[1] *according to the likeness of.* [2] Or, *asp.*

to him. The phrase "from the womb," refers, undoubtedly, to their birth; and the idea is, that as soon as they begin to act they act wrong; they show that they are strangers to God. Strictly speaking, this passage does not affirm anything directly of what exists in the heart *before* men begin to act, for it is by their "*speaking* lies" that they show their estrangement; yet it is proper to *infer* that where this is universal, there *is* something lying back of this which makes it certain that they *will* act thus—just as when a tree always bears the same kind of fruit, we infer that there is something *in* the tree, back of the actual *bearing* of the fruit, which makes it certain that it *will* bear such fruit and no other. This *something* in the heart of a child is what is commonly meant by *original sin.* ¶ *They go astray.* The Hebrew word here used means to go astray, to wander, to err. It is used in reference to drunken persons who reel, Isa. xxviii. 7; and to the soul, as erring or wandering from the paths of truth and piety, Ezek. xlviii. 11; Ps. xcv. 10; cxix. 110; Prov. xxi. 16. The *manner* in which the persons here referred to did this, is indicated here by their *speaking lies.* ¶ *As soon as they be born.* Marg., as in Heb., *from the belly.* The meaning is, not that they speak lies *as soon as* they are born, which could not be literally true, but that this is the *first act.* The first thing *done* is not an act of holiness, but an act of sin—showing what is in the heart. ¶ *Speaking lies.* They are false in their statements; false in their promises; false in their general character. This is *one* of the forms of sin, indicating original depravity; and it is undoubtedly selected here because this was particularly manifested by the enemies of David. They were false, perfidious, and could not be trusted. If it be proved, therefore, that all men are wicked, then *this* passage becomes a proper and an important text to demonstrate that this wickedness is not the result of temptation or example, but that it is the expression of the depravity of the heart by nature; that the tendency of man by nature is not to goodness, but to sin; that the first developments of character are sinful; that there is something lying back of sinful acts in men which makes it certain that they will act as they do; and that this always manifests itself in the first acts which they perform.

4. *Their poison.* Their malignity; their bad spirit; that which they utter or throw out of their mouth. The reference here is to what they speak or utter (ver. 3), and the idea is, that it is penetrating and deadly. ¶ *Like the poison of a serpent.* Marg., as in Heb., *according to the likeness.* In this expression no particular class of serpents is referred to except those which are *poisonous.* ¶ *Like the deaf adder.* Marg., *asp.* The word may refer either to the viper, the asp, or the adder. See Notes on Isa. xi. 8. The *particular* idea here is, that the serpent referred to was as it were *deaf;* it could not be tamed or charmed; it seemed to stop its own ears, so that there was no means of rendering it a safe thing to approach it. The supposition is that there *were* serpents which, though deadly in their poison, *might* be charmed or tamed, but that *this* species of serpent could *not.* The sense, as applied to the wicked, is, that there was no way of overcoming their evil propensities,—of preventing them from giving utterance to words that were like poison, or from doing mischief to all with whom they came in contact. They were malignant, and there was no power of checking their malignity. Their poi-

5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, [1] charming never so wisely.

[1] Or, *be the charmer never so cunning.*

son was deadly, and there was no possibility of restraining them from doing evil. ¶ That *stoppeth her ear.* Which *seems* to stop her ear; which refuses to hear the words and incantations by which other serpents are subdued and tamed. Others, however, refer this to the man himself, meaning, *like the deaf adder he stops his ear;* that is, he voluntarily makes himself like the adder that does not hear, and that will not be tamed. The former interpretation, however, is to be preferred.

5. *Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers.* The word rendered *charmers* — לָחַשׁ, *lahhash* — means properly *whisperers, mutterers,* and it refers here to those who made use of spells or incantations,—sorcerers or magicians. See Notes on Isa. viii. 19. These incantations were accompanied usually with a low, muttering sound, or with a gentle whisper, as if for the purpose of calming and controlling the object of the incantation. Such charmers of serpents (or pretended charmers) abounded among the ancients, and still abound in India. The art is carried in India to great perfection; and there are multitudes of persons who obtain a livelihood by this pretended or real power over venomous serpents. Their living is obtained either by *exhibiting* their power over serpents which they carry with them in their peregrinations, or by *drawing* them by their incantations from the walls of gardens, houses, and hedges, where they had taken up their abode. Multitudes of facts, referred to by those who have resided in India, seem to confirm the opinion that this power is real. ¶ *Charming never so wisely.* Marg., *Be the charmer never so cunning.* The word rendered here *charming*—חוֹבֵר, *hhobair*—means properly to bind; to bind together. The *literal* meaning of the original Hebrew is, *binding spells that are wise,*—or, that are *cunning;* in other words, making use of the most cunning or skilful of their incantations and charms. The meaning is, that the utmost skill of enchantment will be unsuccessful. They are beyond the reach of any such arts. So with the men referred to by David. They were malignant and venomous; and nothing would disarm them of their malignity, and destroy their venom. What is here affirmed of these men is true in a certain sense of all men. The depravity of the human heart is such that nothing that man can employ will subdue it. No eloquence, no persuasion, no commands, no remonstrances, no influence that man can exert, will subdue it. It cannot be charmed down; it cannot be removed by any skill or power of man, however great. The following remarks from Dr. Thomson, who has spent twenty years in Palestine (Land and the Book, vol. i. pp. 221–223), will illustrate this passage:—"I have seen many serpent-charmers who do really exercise some extraordinary power over these reptiles. They carry enormous snakes, generally black, about them, allow them to crawl all over their persons and into their bosoms; always, however, with certain precautions, either necessary, or pretended to be so. They repeatedly breathe strongly into the face of the serpent, and occasionally blow spittle, or some medicated composition upon them. It is needless to describe the mountebank tricks which they perform. That which I am least able to account for is the power of detecting the presence of serpents in a house, and of enticing or 'charming' them out of it. The thing is far too common to be made a matter of scepticism. The following account, by Mr. Lane, is a fair statement of this matter:—'The charmer professes to discover, without ocular perception

(but perhaps he does so by a peculiar smell), whether there be any serpents in the house, and if there be, to attract them to him, as the fowler, by the fascination of his voice, allures the bird into his net. As the serpent seeks the darkest place in which to hide himself, the charmer has, in most cases, to exercise his skill in an obscure chamber, where he might easily take a serpent from his bosom, bring it to the people without the door, and



SERPENT-CHARMERS.

affirm that he had found it in the apartment, for no one would venture to enter with him, after having been assured of the presence of one of these reptiles within. But he is often required to perform in the full light of day, surrounded by spectators; and incredulous persons have searched him beforehand, and even stripped him naked, yet his success has been complete. He assumes an air of mystery, strikes the walls with a short palm-stick, whistles, makes a clucking noise with his tongue, and spits upon the ground, and generally says, —I adjure you, by God, if ye be above or if ye be below, that ye come forth; I adjure you by the most great name, if ye be obedient, come forth, and if ye be disobedient, die! die! die!' The serpent is generally dislodged by his stick from a fissure in the wall or from the ceiling of the room. I have heard it asserted that a serpent-charmer, before he enters a house in which he is to try his skill, always employs a servant of that house to introduce one or more serpents; but I have known instances in which this could not be the case, and am inclined to believe that the dervishes above mentioned are generally acquainted with some physical means of discovering the presence of ser-

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth; break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

7 Let them melt [n] away as waters *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

8 As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away; *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.

[n] Exod. xv. 15.

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pents without seeing them, and of attracting them from their lurking-places. What these 'physical means' may be is yet a secret, as also the 'means' by which persons can handle live scorpions, and can put them into their bosom without fear or injury. I have seen this done again and again, even by small boys. This has always excited my curiosity and astonishment, for scorpions are the most malignant and irascible of all insects. The Hindoos, and after them the Egyptians, are the most famous snake-charmers, scorpion-eaters, etc., etc., although gipsies, Arabs, and others are occasionally found, who gain a vagabond livelihood by strolling round the country, and confounding the ignorant with these feats."

6. *Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth.* The word here rendered *break* means properly *to tear out.* The allusion is to his enemies, represented as wild beasts; and the prayer is, that God would deprive them of the means of doing harm,—as wild animals are rendered harmless when their teeth are broken out. ¶ *Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O* LORD. The word here used means properly *biters* or *grinders:* Job xxix. 17; Prov. xxx. 14; Joel i. 6. Comp. Notes on Ps. iii. 7. The word rendered *young lions* here does not refer to mere whelps, but to full-grown though young lions in their vigour and strength, as contrasted with old lions, or those which are enfeebled by age. The meaning is, that his enemies were of the most fierce and violent kind.

7. *Let them melt away as waters* which *run continually.* Let them vanish or disappear as waters that flow off, or floods that run by, and are no more seen. *Perhaps* the allusion here may be to the waters of a torrent that is swollen, which flow off and are lost in the sand, so that they wholly disappear. See Notes on Job vi. 15–19. The prayer is, that his enemies might perish, or be cut off, and that he might thus be saved from them. ¶ When *he bendeth* his bow to shoot *his arrows.* Literally, "he treads on his arrows." See Notes on Ps. xi. 2. The meaning here is, When he prepares for an attack,—or, prepares to make war, as one does who bends his bow, and places his arrow on the string. The allusion here is to the enemies of David, as seeking his life. ¶ *Let them be as cut in pieces.* That is, Let his arrows be as if they were cut off or *blunted,* so that they will produce no effect. Let them be such, that they will not penetrate and wound.

8. *As a snail* which *melteth, let* every one of them *pass away.* Or rather, As the snail which melteth as it goes; that is, which leaves a slimy trail as it moves along, and thus melts away the more as it advances, until at length it dies. Gesenius, *Lex.* The allusion is to what *seems* to occur to the snail; it seems to melt or to be dissolved as it moves along; or seems to leave a part of itself in the slime which flows from it. ¶ Like *the untimely birth of a woman.* The Hebrew word means literally *that which falls from a woman;* and hence the word is used to denote an abortion. The prayer is, that they might utterly pass away; that they might become like those who never had real life; that their power might wholly disappear. ¶ That *they may not see the sun.* May not be among the living. Comp. Notes on Job iii. 16.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away
o Prov. x. 25.

as ° with a whirlwind, [1] both living, and in *his* wrath.
[1] as *living as wrath.*

9. *Before your pots can feel the thorns.* The word *thorns* here—אָטָד, *atad*—refers to what is called *Christ's thorn*,—the southern buckthorn. *Gesenius.* The fire made of such thorns when dry would be quick and rapid, and water would be soon heated by it. The idea is, that what is here referred to would occur *quickly*—sooner than the most rapid and intense fire could make an impression on a kettle and its contents. The destruction of the wicked would be, as it were, instantaneous. The following quotation from Prof. Hackitt (Illustrations of Scripture, p. 135) will explain this passage: "A species of thorn, now very common near Jerusalem, bears the name of *Spina Christi*, or *Christ's thorn.* The people of the country gather these bushes and plants, and use them as fuel. As it is now, so it was of old. 'As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool,' (Eccles. vii. 6.) 'Before your pots can feel the thorns,' namely, the fire of them, 'he shall sweep them away,' (Ps. lviii. 9.) The figure in this case is taken from travellers in the desert, or from shepherds tenting abroad, who build a fire in the open air, where it is exposed to the wind; a sudden gust arises and sweeps away the fuel almost before it has begun to burn. 'As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire' (Isa. xxxiii. 12). The meaning is that the wicked are worthless,—their destruction shall be sudden and complete." ¶ *He shall take them away.* The word rendered *shall take them away* means properly *to shiver, to shudder;* and it is then applied to the commotion and raging of a tempest. They shall be taken away as in a storm that makes everything shiver or tremble; Job xxvii. 21. It would be done *suddenly* and *entirely.* A sudden storm sent by God would beat upon them, and they would be swept away in an instant. ¶ *Both living and in* his *wrath.* Marg., *as living as wrath.* This expression is exceedingly obscure. The LXX. render it, "he shall devour them as it were living,—as it were in wrath." The Latin Vulgate: "He shall devour them as living, so in wrath." Prof. Alexander: "Whether raw or done." He supposes that the idea is, that God would come upon them while forming their plans; and that the illustration is derived from the act of *cooking*, and that the meaning is, that God would come upon them whether those plans were matured or not,—*cooked* or *raw.* This seems to me to be a very forced construction, and one which it is doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear. The word rendered *living*—חַיִּים—means properly *alive, living;* and then, *lively, fresh, vigorous;* and is applicable then to a plant that is living or green. It *may* be here applied to the *thorns* that had been gathered for the fire, still green or alive; and the idea *here* would be, that even while those thorns were alive and green—before they had been kindled by the fire (or while they were trying to kindle them), a sudden tempest would come and sweep them all away. It is not, indeed, an uncommon occurrence in the deserts of the East, that while, in their journeyings, travellers pause to cook their food, and have gathered the fuel,—thorns, or whatever may be at hand,—and have placed their pot over the fire, a sudden tempest comes from the desert, and sweeps everything away. Rosenmüller *in loc.* Such an occurrence *may* be referred to here. The word rendered *wrath*—חֲרוֹן, *hharon*—means properly *burning;* and then it is used to denote anything burning. It is applied to wrath or anger, because it seems to *burn.* Num. xxv. 4; xxxii. 14; 1 Sam. xxviii. 18. Here, however, it *may* be taken literally as applicable to thorns when they begin to

10 The righteous shall rejoice [p] when he seeth the vengeance: he [q] shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

[p] Rev. xi. 17, 18.

[q] Ps. lxviii. 23.

be kindled, though still green. They are seen first as gathered and placed under the pots; then they are seen as still green,—not dried up by the kindling flame; then they are seen as on fire; and, in a moment—before the pots could be affected by them—all is swept away by a sudden gust of wind. The *idea* is that of the sudden and unexpected descent of God on the wicked, frustrating their schemes even when they seemed to be well formed, and to promise complete success. This does not mean, therefore, that God would cut off and punish the wicked while *living*, but it refers to the fact that their schemes would be suddenly defeated even while they supposed that all things were going on well;—defeated before there was, in fact, any progress made towards the accomplishment, as the arrangements for the evening-meal would all be swept away before even the pot had begun to be warm.

10. *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* When he sees the just punishment inflicted on the wicked. He will approve of it; he will see that it is right; he will be glad that law is maintained, and that wickedness does not triumph; he will rejoice in the safety of those who do right, and in their deliverance from the assaults and the designs of the wicked. Men everywhere approve of the just administration of law, even though it consigns the transgressors to prison or to death; and it is a matter of gratification to all who love law and order when a righteous government is maintained; when wickedness is checked; when justice is administered in a community. This is the end of government and of law; this is what all magistrates are appointed to secure; this is what all good citizens are aiming to accomplish. There is no evidence that the psalmist had any vindictive or revengeful feeling when he uttered the sentiment in this verse. See Notes on Ps. lii. 6. Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 34; xl. 3. ¶ *He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.* Comp. Ps. lxviii. 23. The image here is taken from a battle-field, where the victor treads in the blood of the slain. It is strong language denoting the entire overthrow of the wicked. There can be no doubt, however, that the allusion is to the *feelings* of satisfaction and triumph with which a victor walks over such a field;—the exultation which he has that his foes are subdued, and that he has triumphed. The *idea* is that the righteous will have emotions, when the wicked are subdued and punished, which in some respects *resemble* the feelings of the victor who walks over a field covered with the blood of the slain. Still it is not *necessary* to suppose that these are, in either case, vindictive feelings; or that either the victor or the righteous have pleasure in the shedding of blood, or in the sufferings of others; or that they would not have preferred that the discomfited and slain should *not* have been wicked, and should *not* have been made to suffer in this manner. All that is *essentially* implied in this is, that there is a feeling of satisfaction and approval when law is vindicated, and when the triumph of wickedness is prevented. It would be difficult to show that the feelings expressed by the psalmist are *less* proper than those which an officer of justice *may* have, and *ought* to have, and *does* have, when he has faithfully discharged his duty, and has secured the arrest and punishment of the violators of law; or that the psalmist has expressed anything more than every man must feel who sees *just* punishment inflicted on the guilty. Assuredly it is a matter of rejoicing that wickedness does *not* triumph; it is a thing to exult in when it *is* arrested.

11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* [1] a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth [r] in the earth.

[1] *fruit of*, Isa. iii. 10.

[r] Ps. ix. 16.

11. *So that a man shall say.* That is, every man shall say, or men everywhere shall see this. This expresses the result of a close observation of the Divine dealings among men. The conclusion from those dealings is, (*a*) that there is, on the whole, a reward for the righteous on earth, or that righteousness tends to secure the favour of God and to promote human happiness; and (*b*) that there is a God—a just Being presiding over human affairs. ¶ *A reward for the righteous.* Marg., as in Heb., *fruit for the righteous.* That is, righteousness will produce its appropriate *fruits*, as trees that are cultivated will reward the cultivator. The idea is, that there is a course of things on earth, even with all there is that is mixed and mysterious, which is favourable to virtue; which shows that there is an *advantage* in being righteous; which demonstrates that there is a moral government; which makes it certain that God is the friend of virtue and the enemy of vice; that he is the friend of holiness and an enemy of sin. Comp. Notes on 1 Tim. iv. 8. ¶ *Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* Or, Truly there is a God that judges in the earth. In other words, the course of things demonstrates that the affairs of the world are not left to chance, to fate, or to mere physical laws. There are results of human conduct which show that there is a *Mind* that presides over all; that there is One who has a purpose and plan of his own; that there is One who *administers* government, rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked. The argument is, that there is a course of things which cannot be explained on the supposition that the affairs of earth are left to chance; that they are controlled by fate; that they are regulated by mere physical laws; that they take care of themselves. There is a clear proof of Divine interposition in those affairs, and a clear proof that, on the whole, and in the final result, that interposition is favourable to righteousness and opposed to sin. No man, in other words, can take the *facts* which occur on the earth, and explain them satisfactorily, except on the supposition that there is a God. All other explanations fail; and numerous as it must be admitted are the difficulties that meet us even on this supposition, yet all other suppositions utterly fail in giving any intelligible account of what occurs in our world. See this argument stated in a manner which cannot be confuted, in Bishop Butler's Analogy, part i. chap. iii.

PSALM LIX.

The general title to this psalm is the same as in the two preceding psalms. That it was written by David, as is affirmed in the title, there is every reason to believe. The *occasion* on which it is said to have been composed was "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." This incident is related in 1 Sam. xix. 11: "Saul also sent messengers unto David's house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning." There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with this statement in regard to the time and the occasion of its composition, unless it is in the word *heathen*—גּוֹיִם, *Goim*—twice used (vers. 5, 8),—a term, which (De Wette maintains) belongs properly to people of a foreign nation, and a foreign religion. It is true, however, that while the word originally had this meaning, it came to be used to denote any people or persons who had the general character and spirit which was supposed to distinguish nations without the knowledge of the true God; those who were cruel, harsh, unfeeling, oppressive, savage. Ps. ii. 1, 8; ix. 5, 15, 19, 20; x. 16; lxxix. 6, 10; cvi. 47, *et al.* In this sense it might be used here, without impropriety, as applicable to the enemies of David.

At what precise *time* the psalm was composed, it is, of course, impossible now to ascertain. All that is determined by

PSALM LIX.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, *s* Michtam of David; when *t* Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

DELIVER [u] me from mine enemies, O my God: [1] defend me

s Ps. lvii., *title.* *t* 1 Sam. xix. 11. etc. *u* Ps. xviii. 48.

from them that rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody [v] men.

3 For, lo, they lie in wait for

[1] *set me on high.* *v* Ps. cxxxix. 19.

the title is that it was on that occasion, or with reference to that event; but whether it was at the very time when those enemies were known to be watching the house, or whether it was in view of that scene as recollected afterwards, recalling the feelings which then passed through his mind, cannot now be determined with certainty. That David was aware that his enemies were thus watching him is apparent from 1 Sam. xix. 11; that such thoughts as are recorded in the psalm passed through his mind in that time of danger is not improbable, but it can hardly be supposed that such an occasion would allow of the leisure necessary to express them in the form in which we now have them in the psalm. The probability, therefore, seems to be, that the psalm is a subsequent composition, recording the thoughts which then actually passed through his mind.

The psalm has no very regular order. The mind passes from one thing to another,—now uttering fervent prayer; now describing the enemy—his character and plans; and now expressing the confident hope of deliverance, and the purpose to praise God. Indeed the very structure of the psalm seems to me to furnish evidence that it describes feelings which *would* pass through the mind on such an occasion. Thus we have in vers. 1, 2, 5, 11–15, *prayer* for deliverance; in vers. 3, 4, 6, 12, intermingled with these prayers, a description of the character and designs of these enemies; and in vers. 8, 9, 16, 17, an expression of confident hope,—a purpose to praise God for deliverance and mercy. All this is indicative of such feelings as *might*, and probably *would*, pass through the mind in such a time of peril as that referred to in the title.

On the different phrases in the title, see Introd. to Psalms iv., lvii., and xvi.

1. *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 48. This prayer was offered when the spies sent by Saul surrounded the house of David. They had come to apprehend him, and it is to be presumed that they had come in sufficient numbers, and with sufficient power, to effect their object. Their purpose was not to break in upon him in the night, but to watch their opportunity, when he went forth in the morning, to slay him (1 Sam. xix. 11), and there seemed no way for him to escape. Of their coming, and of their design, Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the wife of David, seems to have been apprised, —perhaps by some one of her father's family. She informed David of the arrangement, and assured him that unless he should escape in the night, he would be put to death in the morning. She, therefore, let him down through a window, and he escaped, 1 Sam. xix. 12. It was in this way that he was in fact delivered; in this way that his prayer was answered. A faithful wife saved him. ¶ *Defend me from them that rise up against me.* Marg., as in Heb., *Set me on high.* The idea is that of placing him, as it were, on a tower, or on an eminence which would be inaccessible. These were common places of refuge or defence. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

2. *Deliver me from the workers of iniquity.* The workers of iniquity here referred to were Saul and those whom he employed to carry out his murderous purpose, — the men that had been sent to slay him. ¶ *And save me from bloody men.* Heb., *Men of bloods;* that is, men whose trade is blood; who seek to shed my blood, or who seek my life. See Notes on Ps. v. 6; xxvi. 9; lv. 23.

3. *For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul.* They lie in wait as wild beasts

my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not [w] *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.

4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: awake to [1] help me, and behold.

5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen;

[w] 1 Sam. xxiv. 11, 17.

[1] *meet.*

do for their prey, ready to spring upon it. The word here used is often employed to denote the act of lying in ambush; of watching in secret places to spring upon a victim: Judges ix. 32; xxi. 20; Ps. x. 9. The word *soul* here means *life.* They lie in ambush that they may kill me. ¶ *The mighty are gathered against me.* Strong men; hostile men; cruel men. Saul would employ on this occasion not the weak, the cowardly, the faint-hearted, but men of courage and strength; men who were unscrupulous in their character; men who would not be likely to be moved by entreaty, or turned from their purpose by compassion. It is not mere *strength* that is here referred to, but that kind of strength or courage which can be employed in a desperate enterprise, and which is fitted to accomplish any scheme of wickedness, however daring or difficult. ¶ *Not* for *my transgression, nor* for *my sin.* This is done not on account of my violating the laws of the land, nor because it is alleged that I am a sinner against God. David was conscious that he did not deserve this treatment from the hand of man. He had been guilty of no wrong against Saul that exposed him to just punishment. He carried with him the consciousness of innocence as to any crime that could have made this treatment proper; and he felt that it was all the result of unjust suspicions. It was not improper for him to refer to this in his prayer; for, however he might feel that he was a sinner in the sight of God, yet he felt that a great and grievous wrong was done him by man; and he prayed, therefore, that a righteous God would interpose. See Notes on Ps. vii. 8; xvii. 2; xxxv. 24; xliii. 1.

4. *They run and prepare themselves.* That is, they *hasten* to accomplish this; they are quick to obey the command of Saul requiring them to slay me. The word *prepare* refers to whatever was deemed necessary to enable them to accomplish what they had been commanded to do,—arming themselves, making provision for their journey, etc. ¶ *Without* my *fault.* That is, without anything on my part to deserve this, or to justify Saul and those employed by him in what they attempt to do. David, in all this, was conscious of innocence. In his own feelings towards Saul, and in all his public acts, he knew that he had sought only the king's welfare, and that he had been obedient to the laws. ¶ *Awake to help me.* That is, *arouse,* as one does from sleep. See Notes on Ps. vii. 6. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 23. The word rendered *to help me,* is rendered in the margin, *to meet me.* This is the meaning of the Hebrew. It is a prayer that God would meet him, or come to him, and aid him.

5. *Thou therefore, O* LORD *God of hosts.* God of armies:—commanding all the armies of heaven,—the angels, and the stars and constellations drawn out in the form of armies;—thou, thus endowed with all power, and able to subdue all men though arrayed and combined for purposes of evil,—awake to my help. On the meaning of the phrase *God of hosts,* see Notes on Isa. i. 9. ¶ *The God of Israel.* The God of the Hebrew people—the descendants of Jacob or Israel,—the Protector of thy people,—awake to help *me,* one of those who, being of that covenant people, come under the promise of protection. ¶ *Awake to visit all the heathen.* On the word here rendered *heathen*—גּוֹיִם, *Goim*—

be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords [x] *are* in their lips; for who, *say they*, doth hear?

[x] Prov. xii. 18.

see Notes on Ps. ii. 1. It is from the use of this word in this verse and in ver. 8, as remarked in the Introd. to the psalm, that De Wette infers that the psalm could not have been composed on the occasion referred to in the title, and argues, that this term could not be applied by David to Saul and his followers. This objection, however, will lose its force if the word is understood as denoting men who had the usual character of heathens, who were fierce, bloody, savage, cruel. In this sense the word might be employed with reference to those who were engaged in seeking the life of David. David, using the common word *heathen* or *nations*, as denoting those who are wicked, cruel, harsh, prays that God would awake to visit them; that is, to visit them for purposes of punishment, or so to visit them as to prevent their carrying out their designs. ¶ *Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.* That is, Arrest and punish them *as* transgressors, or *being* transgressors. This prayer is not inconsistent with a desire that such men might be converted, and *thus* obtain mercy; but it is a prayer that God would not suffer them, being wicked men, to go at large and accomplish the work of wickedness which they designed. See General Introd. § 6. (5) (*e*). ¶ *Selah.* A musical pause. See Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

6. *They return at evening.* Many have rendered this in the imperative, as in ver. 14, "*Let* them return at evening," etc. So Luther renders it, and so also De Wette. But the more natural and obvious interpretation is to render it in the indicative, as describing the manner in which his enemies came upon him—like dogs seeking their prey; fierce mastiffs, howling and ready to spring upon him. From the phrase "they return at evening," thus explained, it would seem probable that they watched their opportunity, or lay in wait, to secure their object; that having failed at first, they drew off again until evening, perhaps continuing thus for several days unable to accomplish their object. ¶ *They make a noise like a dog.* So savages, after lurking stealthily all day, raise the war-whoop at night, and come upon their victims. It is possible that an assault of this kind *had* been attempted; or, more probably, it is a description of the manner in which they *would* make their assault, and of the spirit with which it would be done. ¶ *And go round about the city.* The word *city* is used in a large sense in the Scriptures, and is often applied to places that we should now describe as *villages.* Any town within the limits of which David was lodged, would answer to this term.

7. *Behold, they belch out with their mouth.* The word rendered *belch out* means properly to boil forth; to gush out, to flow; and then, to pour forth copiously, or in a running stream, as a fountain does. Hence the word means also to pour out *words*—words that flow freely—words of folly, abuse, or reproach. Prov. xv. 2, "The mouth of fools poureth out (Marg., *belcheth* or *babbleth*) foolishness." Prov. xv. 28, "The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things;" that is, *gushes over* with wicked things—as a fountain overflows. In this place, the word means that the enemies of David who were in pursuit of his life, poured out reproaches and threatenings like a gushing fountain. ¶ *Swords* are *in their lips.* Their words are as sharp swords. See Notes on Ps. lvii. 4. ¶ *For who, say they, doth hear?* That is, no one hears who will be able

8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh [y] at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

9 *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee: for God *is* my [z] defence.

y Ps. ii. 4. *z* Prov. xviii. 10. *a* Ps. xxi. 3.

10 The God of my mercy shall prevent [a] me: God shall let me see *my desire* upon [1] mine enemies.

11 Slay [b] them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by

[1] *observers*, Ps. lvi. 2.
b Gen. iv. 12, 15; Rev. ix. 6.

to punish us. They dread no man; and they have no fear of God. Comp. Notes on Ps. x. 11. The words "say they" are, however, supplied here by the translators, and are not in the original; and the language *may* be understood as that of David himself, *as if* no one heard; that is, It is no wonder that they thus pour out words of reproach, for who *is* there to hear and to punish them? The former interpretation, however, is to be preferred. The language expresses the feelings of the enemies of David, who indulged freely in language of abuse and reproach *as if* there were none to hear.

8. *But thou, O* LORD, *shalt laugh at them.* That is, God will hear them, and will have all their efforts in derision, or will treat them with contempt. See Notes on Ps. ii. 4; xxxvii. 13. ¶ *Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.* All those referred to in this psalm—the enemies of David—who have the character, and who manifest the spirit of the heathen; that is, of those who are not actuated by true religion. See Notes on ver. 5. This verse expresses the strong conviction of David, that all the efforts of his enemies would be vain; that God *would be* his Protector; and that he would save him from their evil designs.

9. Because of *his strength will I wait upon thee.* Literally, "His strength—I will wait upon thee." The reference here is not to the strength or power of God, as if the fact that *He* was powerful was a reason why the psalmist should look to him,—but it is to the strength or power of the enemy,—of Saul and his followers. There is much abruptness in the expression. The psalmist looks at the power of his enemy. "'His strength,' he cries. It is great. It is beyond my power to resist it. It is so great that I have no other refuge but God; and *because* it is so great, I will fix my eyes on him alone." The word rendered *wait upon* means rather to look to; to observe; to fix the eyes upon. ¶ *For God* is *my defence.* Marg., *My high place.* That is, God was to him *as* a high place, or a place of refuge; a place where he would be safe. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

10. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* Or rather, "My God—his mercy shall prevent me." This is in accordance with the present reading of the Hebrew text, and is probably correct. The psalmist looks to God as his God, and then the feeling at once springs up that his mercy—his favour—his loving-kindness—*would* "prevent" him. On the word *prevent,* see Notes on Ps. xxi. 3; comp. Ps. xvii. 13; xviii. 5. The meaning here is, that God would *go before him,* or would *anticipate* his necessities. ¶ *God shall let me see* my desire *upon mine enemies.* That is, He will let me see them discomfited, and disappointed in their plans. This is equivalent to saying that God would give him the victory, or would not suffer them to triumph over him. See Notes on Ps. liv. 7.

11. *Slay them not, lest my people forget.* The meaning of this seems to be, Do not destroy them at once, lest, being removed out of the way, the people should forget what was done, or should lose the impression which it is desirable should be produced by their punishment. Let them live, and let them wander about, as exiles under the Divine displeasure, that they may be permanent and

thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

12 *For* [c] the sin of their mouth, *and* the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride; and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.

13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not *be*; and [d] let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

[c] Prov. xii. 13.

[d] Ps. xlvi. 10, 11.

enduring proofs of the justice of God; of the evil of sin; of the danger of violating the Divine law. So Cain wandered on the earth (Gen. iv. 12–14), a living proof of that justice which avenges murder; and so the Jews still wander, a lasting illustration of the justice which followed their rejection of the Messiah. The prayer of the psalmist, therefore, is that the fullest expression might be given to the Divine sense of the wrong which his enemies had done, that the salutary lesson might not be soon forgotten, but might be permanent and enduring. ¶ *Scatter them by thy power.* Break up their combinations, and let them go abroad as separate wanderers, proclaiming everywhere, by being thus vagabonds on the earth, the justice of God. ¶ *And bring them down.* Humble them. Show them their weakness. Show them that they have not power to contend against God. ¶ *O Lord our shield.* See Notes, Ps. v. 12; xxxiii. 20. The words "*our*" here, and "*my*" in the former part of the verse, are designed to show that the author of the psalm regarded God as *his* God, and the people of the land as *his*, in the sense that he was identified with them, and felt that his cause was really that of the people.

12. For *the sin of their mouth*, etc. That is, in belching out words of reproach and malice, ver. 7. ¶ *Let them even be taken in their pride.* In the very midst of their schemes, or while confidently relying on the success of their plans. Even while their hearts are elated, and they are sure of success, let them be arrested, and let their plans be foiled. ¶ *And for cursing and lying* which *they speak.* That is, on account of the false charges which they have brought against me, and of their bitter imprecations on me. The allusion is to the accusations brought against David, and which were believed by Saul, and which were the foundation of the efforts made by Saul to take his life.

13. *Consume* them *in wrath.* Or, in thy justice. The idea in the word *consume* here is to finish; to complete; to bring to an end. It does not mean to *burn* them as our word might seem to imply, nor is there any reference to the *mode* or *manner* in which their power was to be brought to an end. It is merely a prayer that all their plans might be frustrated; that there might be an entire completion of their attempts; or that they might be in no sense successful. ¶ *Consume* them. The expression is repeated for the sake of emphasis, implying a desire that the work might be *complete.* ¶ *That they* may *not* be. That things might be as if they were not in the land of the living. ¶ *And let them know.* Those who are now plotting my death. ¶ *That God ruleth in Jacob.* That God rules among his people, protecting them and guarding them from the attacks of their enemies; that he is their friend, and that he is the enemy of all those who seek to injure and destroy them. ¶ *Unto the ends of the earth.* Everywhere. All over the world. Let it be shown that the same principles of government prevail wherever man abides or wanders—that God manifests himself everywhere as the friend of right, and the enemy of wrong. The phrase "*the ends of the earth*," is in accordance with the prevailing conception that the earth was an extended plane, and that it had limits or boundaries. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 22, 28.

14 And at evening let them return, *and* let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

15 Let them wander up and down [1] for meat, [2] and grudge if they be not satisfied.

16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the [e] morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

[1] *to eat*, Isa. lxv. 13.
[2] Or, *if they be not satisfied, then they will stay all night.*

[e] Ps. xxx. 5.

14. *And at evening let them return.* See Notes on ver. 6. The original here is the same as in ver. 6, with the exception of the word "*and*" at the beginning. This qualifies the sentence, and makes the construction in our version proper. The language is that of confident triumph. They came around the city to take David; they shouted and shrieked as dogs bark and howl when they come upon their prey. David asked God to interpose and save him; and *then*, says he, let them come if they will, and howl around the city; they will find no prey; they will be like hungry dogs from whom their anticipated victim has escaped. Let them come, and howl and rage. They can do no harm. They will meet with disappointment; and such disappointment will be a proper punishment for their sins.

15. *Let them wander up and down for meat.* Let them be like dogs that wander about for food, and find none. The idea is, that they would not find *him*, and would be then as dogs that had sought in vain for food. ¶ *And grudge if they be not satisfied.* Marg., *If they be not satisfied, then they will stay all night.* The marginal reading is most in accordance with the Hebrew. The sentence is obscure, but the idea seems to be that they would not be satisfied,—that is, they would not obtain that which they had sought; and, like hungry and disappointed dogs, they would be compelled to pass the night in this miserable and wretched condition. The word which our translators have rendered *grudge*—from לוּן, *lun*—means properly to pass the night; then, to abide, to remain, to dwell; and then, in Hiphil, to show oneself obstinate and stubborn,—from the idea of remaining or persisting in a bad cause; and hence the word sometimes means to murmur: Num. xiv. 29; Ex. xvii. 3. It has not, however, the signification of *grudging*, though it *might* mean here to murmur or complain because they were disappointed. But the most natural meaning is that which the word properly bears—that of passing the night, as referring to their wandering about, disappointed in their object, and yet still hoping that they might possibly obtain it. The anticipated feeling in the mind of the psalmist is that which *he* would have in the consciousness of his own safety, and in the pleasure of knowing that they must sooner or later find out that their victim had escaped.

16. *But I will sing of thy power.* That is, I will praise thee for the manifestation of thy power in rescuing me from danger. ¶ *Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.* When the light dawns; when these troubles are over; when the night of calamity shall have passed by. There is an allusion here, probably, to the fact that they encompassed the place of his abode at night (vers. 6, 14); but there is also the implied idea that that night was emblematic of sorrow and distress. The morning would come; morning after such a night of sorrow and trouble; a morning of joy and gladness, when he would feel that he had complete deliverance. Then would he praise God aloud. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxi. 12. ¶ *For thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.* That is, he looked to the time when he would feel this; when

17 Unto *f* thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

f Ps. xviii. 1.

looking back he could say this; when in view of it he would praise God.

17. *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.* The source of strength to me; the real strength by which I have obtained deliverance is in thee. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 1. ¶ *For God is my defence.* See Notes on ver. 9. ¶ And *the God of my mercy.* The God who has showed mercy to me; he from whom all these favours have sprung. Whatever means might be used to secure his own safety (comp. 1 Sam. xix. 12, *et seq.*) still he felt that his deliverance was to be traced wholly to God. *He* had interposed and had saved him; and it was proper, therefore, that praise should be ascribed to him. The experience of David in the case referred to in this psalm should be an inducement to all who are in danger to put their trust in God; his anticipated feelings of gratitude, and his purpose to praise God when he should be delivered, should awaken in us the resolution to ascribe to God all the praise when we are delivered from impending troubles, and when our lives are lengthened out where we have been in imminent danger. Whatever may have been the means of our rescue, it is to be traced to the interposition of God.

PSALM LX.

In the title, this psalm is ascribed to David. The occasion on which it is said to have been composed was after he had been engaged in wars in the East—in Aramea—and when he was meditating the completion of his conquests in the subjugation of Idumea. The time of its composition, according to the title, was that referred to in 2 Sam. viii., comp. 1 Chron. xviii. The occasion will be best understood by an explanation of the title.

On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv.

The phrase "upon Shushan-eduth" means properly *Lily of Testimony.* The word *shushan*—שׁוֹשַׁן—means properly *lily.* See Notes on the title to Ps. xlv., where, as in the titles to Ps. lxix. and lxxx., the *plural* form of the word occurs. This is the only instance in which it is found in the singular number, when in the *title* to a psalm. The word *eduth*—עֵדוּת—means properly testimony; law; precept; revelation. It is applied to the law of God, as a *testimony* which God bears to the truth, Ps. xix. 7; 2 Kings xi. 12; and especially to the *ark,* called "the ark of the testimony," as containing the law or the Divine *testimony* to the truth. Ex. xxv. 21, 22 (comp. xvi. 34); xxvi. 33, 34; xxx. 6, 26; xxxi. 7. The word occurs frequently, and is uniformly translated *testimony.* Ex. xxvii. 21; xxx. 36; xxxi. 18, *et sæpe.* See Notes on Ps. xix. 7. *The lily of the law* would properly express the meaning of the phrase here, and it *may* have been the name of a musical instrument having a resemblance to a *lily*—open-mouthed like the lily; perhaps some form of the trumpet. Why the term *eduth*—*testimony* or *law*—was connected with this, it is not easy to determine. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes that the word means *revelation,* and that the term was used in these inscriptions because the authors of the psalms wrote by *revelation.* But if this was the reason, it would not explain why the title was prefixed to these psalms rather than others, since all were composed by revelation. Prof. Alexander, somewhat fancifully, supposes that the name *lily* is used in this title to denote *beauty*; that the reference is to *the beauty of the law,* and that the psalm is designed to celebrate that beauty. But it is sufficient to say in reply to this that there is no particular mention of the *law* in this psalm, and no special commemoration of its beauty. If the title had been prefixed to Ps. xix., or to Ps. cxix., there would then have been some foundation for the remark. On the whole, it seems impossible to determine the *reason* of the use of the term here. It would seem most probable that the allusion is to a musical instrument, or to some classes of musical instruments to which the term had been originally applied with reference to the use of those instruments in the services connected with the "ark of the testimony," or the celebration of the *law* of God; but on what occasion such instruments were first used, or why the term

was applied, we cannot hope now to understand.

On the word *Michtam*, see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. xvi. It indicates nothing here in regard to the character of the psalm to which it is prefixed. It may be merely one form of denoting that it was a composition of David.

The word rendered *to teach*, means here that the psalm was adapted to impart instruction, and in this sense it is not unlike the word *Maschil* (Title to Ps. xxxii.), as being a psalm fitted to impart valuable information on the subject referred to, or perhaps to be learned and treasured up in the memory. It is not possible for us, however, to understand why the language was applied to this psalm rather than to others.

The psalm is said to have been composed when David "strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned and smote in the valley of salt twelve thousand." The allusion is to the transactions referred to in 2 Sam. viii. and 1 Chron. xviii. In those chapters we learn that David made extensive conquests in the East, extending his victories over Moab, Syria, and Hamath, and subduing the country as far as the Euphrates. It is to these victories that the psalm refers, see vers. 7, 8. The words rendered *Aram-naharaim* mean properly *Aram* (or Aramea) *of the two rivers*, and the reference is to Syria or Mesopotamia. The compound word occurs elsewhere in the following places, in all of which it is rendered *Mesopotamia*, Gen. xxiv. 10; Deut. xxiii. 4; Judges iii. 8; 1 Chron. xix. 6. The word *Aram* is of frequent occurrence, and properly refers to *Syria*. The name comprehended more than Syria proper, and the term *Aram-naharaim*, or *Aram of the two rivers*, was used to designate that part of the general country of Aramea which was between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The compound term *Aram-zobah* refers also to a part of Aramea or Syria. This kingdom was in the neighbourhood of Damascus, and perhaps comprehended *Hamath*, and probably extended as far as the Euphrates. The king of this country is represented as making war with Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 47), and with David (2 Sam. viii. 3; x. 6). In 2 Sam. viii. 3, David is represented as having smitten "Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates." It is to these wars, and to this conquest, that the title of the psalm alludes.

The language in the title "when Joab returned," would seem to imply that these conquests were achieved not by David in person, but by *Joab*,—a circumstance not at all improbable, as he was the leader of the armies of David; 2 Sam. xx. 23, "Now Joab was over all the host of Israel." David had thus subdued Syria, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, and the Philistines, and the Amalekites, and Hadadezer, king of Zobah, and had dedicated to the Lord the silver and the gold which he had taken in these conquests (2 Sam. viii. 11, 12); but it would seem probable that Edom or Idumea still held out, or that at the time of composing the psalm that country had not been subdued. But the subjugation of that land was necessary to complete the conquests of David, and to make his kingdom safe. It was at this time probably, in the interval between 2 Sam. viii. 12 and 2 Sam. viii. 14, that the psalm was composed, or *in view* of the strong desire of David to subdue Edom; see vers. 8, 9 of the psalm, "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," . . . "Who will lead me into Edom?" It would seem that there were some special difficulties in the conquest of that country; or that there had been some partial discomfiture in attempting it (Ps. lx. 1–3), and David was now fearful that he had in some way incurred the Divine displeasure after all his conquests, and that Edom—a place so strong and so important—was likely to remain unsubdued. And yet the conquest *was* made, for it is said in the title "that Joab smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand." Comp. 2 Sam. viii. 13.

The phrase "the Valley of Salt" is explained by the fact that not a few valleys are found in Arabia and Syria, which are at certain periods—in the wet seasons—stagnant pools; but which, when they are dried up, leave an incrustation of salt, or a saline deposit on the sand. Travellers make mention of such pools, from which they obtain their supplies of salt. Van Hamelsveld, Bib. Geog., i. p. 402. *What* valley is here referred to is not certain. It would seem most probable that it was the valley in which the Dead Sea is situated, as being eminently the valley of salt, or the valley in which such deposits abounded. Dr. Robinson (Researches in Palestine, vol.

ii. p. 483), supposes that this "valley of salt" is situated at the southern end of the Dead Sea—the Ghor south of the Dead Sea, and adjacent to the *Mountain of Salt*,—"the whole body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock-salt," p. 482. This valley separates the ancient territories of Judah and Edom, and would, therefore, be the place where the battle would naturally be fought.

This victory is said in the title of the psalm to have been achieved by Joab; in 2 Sam. viii. 13, it is attributed to David; in the parallel place in 1 Chron. xviii. 12, it is said to have been achieved by Abishai,—in the margin, Abshai. There is no discrepancy between the account in 2 Sam., where the victory is ascribed to David, and that in the title to the psalm where it is ascribed to Joab, for though the battle may have been fought by Joab, yet it was really one of the victories of David, as Joab acted under him and by his orders,—as we speak of the conquests of Napoleon, attributing to him the conquests which were secured by the armies under his command. There is greater difficulty in reconciling the account in 1 Chronicles with the title to the psalm, where one ascribes the victory to Joab, and the other to Abishai. Some have supposed that either in the title to the psalm or in 1 Chronicles there has been an error in transcribing. But such an error could hardly have occurred. The most probable opinion seems to be that the victory was achieved by the *joint* action of the forces under Joab and his brother Abishai, and that with propriety it may be spoken of as the victory of either of them. We know that on one occasion Joab thus divided his forces, retaining the command of a portion of the army to himself, and assigning the other portion to his brother Abishai (2 Sam. x. 9, 10), and it is possible that there may have been such a division of the army here, and that the victory may have been so connected with the skill and valour of Abishai that it might without impropriety be spoken of as *his* victory, while there was no impropriety also in ascribing it to *Joab*, as entrusted with the general command, or to *David* who had planned and directed the expedition.

There is, also, a discrepancy in the numbers mentioned as slain, in the title to the psalm, and in the account in Samuel and Chronicles. In 2 Sam. viii. 13, and in 1 Chron. xviii. 12, the number is "eighteen thousand;" in the title to the psalm, it is "twelve thousand." Why the statement varies, it is impossible to determine with certainty. We cannot suppose that the author of the psalm was ignorant of the usual estimate of the number, and we have no evidence that there is an error in the transcription. The probability is, that there may have been, as is often the case, in the account of battles, *two* estimates. The common and more moderate estimate may have been that the number was twelve thousand,—and this was adopted by the author of the psalm. The more accurate and well-ascertained estimate may have been that which was placed in the regular history, in the Books of Samuel and the Chronicles. If the actual number was in fact as great as eighteen thousand, then there is no contradiction,—for the greater number includes the less. If eighteen thousand were actually slain, there was no falsehood in the assertion, according to the first estimate, that twelve thousand had fallen in the battle; for that statement was in fact true, though a subsequent and more accurate "return" from the army made the number larger. Both statements were true. In saying that three men were drowned in a flood, or lost at sea in a storm, I do not falsify a declaration which may be made subsequently that not only three perished but six or more.

There is no reference, in the accounts in Samuel and the Chronicles, to the partial discomfiture referred to in the psalm (vers. 1-3); and the impression from those historical narratives would *probably* be that the armies of David had been uniformly successful. Yet it is possible that some things may have been omitted in the rapid survey of the conquests of David in Samuel and the Chronicles. The design of the authors of those books may have been to give a *general summary* of the wars or series of wars by which David obtained a final victory over his enemies, and brought into subjection all that he regarded as properly his territory, or all that had been included in the general promise to Abraham and his posterity, without noticing the reverses or disasters that *may* have occurred in securing those triumphs. Perhaps the most probable supposition in the case is, that during the absence of the armies in the east the Edomites had taken occasion to invade the land of Palestine from the south, and that in endeavouring to

PSALM LX.

To the chief Musician upon *g* Shusan-eduth, [1] Michtam of David, to teach; when *h* he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

g Ps. lxxx., *title*. [1] Or, *a golden* Psalm.
h 2 Sam. viii. 3—13.

O GOD, thou *i* hast cast us off, thou hast [2] scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn *k* thyself to us again.

2 Thou hast made the earth to

i Ps. xliv. 9. [2] *broken*.
k Lam. iii. 31, 32; Zech. x. 6.

repel them, there had been some defeats and losses in the comparatively small forces which David was then able to employ. He now summoned his armies on their return, and made a vigorous and decided effort to expel the Edomites from the land, to carry the warfare into their own country, and to add their territory to that which he had already brought under subjection. In this he was entirely successful. 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Chron. xviii. 13.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. A statement of the disaster which had occurred, as if God had cast his people off, and as if, after all, they might be given up into the hands of their enemies, vers. 1-3.

II. A statement of the object for which God now summoned his people to war,—that of carrying forth the banner of truth, or of bringing nations into subjection to the true religion, vers. 4, 5.

III. A reference to the conquests already made, or to the dominion which David had set up over Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, Moab, and Philistia, vers. 6–8.

IV. The expression of a strong desire to complete the series of conquests by subduing Edom or Idumea, vers. 8, 9. That alone remained. That offered formidable resistance to the armies of David. The conquest of that seemed difficult, if not hopeless, and the psalmist, therefore, asks with deep solicitude who would aid him in this war; who would bring him successfully into the strong city—the strong fortifications of Edom, ver. 9.

V. An appeal to God to do it; to that God who had cast them off; to him who had left their armies to go forth alone. David now calls on him to return to those forces, and to render aid,—expressing the confident assurance that he *would* thus return, and that the victory would be secured, vers. 10–12.

1. *O God, thou hast cast us off.* The word here used means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything *as if* it were foul or rancid;—to repel, to spurn, to cast away. See Notes on Ps. xliii. 2. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him. The allusion, according to the view taken in the Introd. to the psalm, is to some defeat or disaster which had occurred after the conquests in the East, or during the absence of the armies of David in the East (2 Sam. viii.; 1 Chron. xviii.);—probably to the fact that the Edomites had taken occasion to invade the southern part of Palestine, and that the forces employed to expel them had been unsuccessful. ¶ *Thou hast scattered us.* Marg., *broken*. So the Hebrew. The word is applied to the forces of war which are *broken* and *scattered* by defeat, 2 Sam. v. 20. ¶ *Thou hast been displeased.* The word here used means to breathe; to breathe hard; and then, to be angry. See Notes on Ps. ii. 12. God had treated them *as if* he was displeased or angry. He had suffered them to be defeated. ¶ *O turn thyself to us again.* Return to our armies, and give us success. This might be rendered, "Thou *wilt* turn to us;" that is, thou wilt favour us, — expressing a confident belief that God would do this, as in ver. 12. It is more in accordance, however, with the usual structure of the Psalms to regard this as a prayer. Many of the psalms begin with a prayer, and end with the expression of a confident assurance that the prayer has been, or would certainly be heard.

2. *Thou hast made the earth to tremble.* This refers, doubtless, to some calamity that might be compared with an earthquake,—some disaster, discomfiture, or defeat that had

tremble; thou hast broken it: heal [l] the breaches thereof: for it shaketh.

3 Thou hast showed thy people [m] hard things; thou hast made us to [n] drink the wine of astonishment.

4 Thou hast given a banner [o] to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

l 2 Chron. vii. 14; Jer. xxx. 17.
m Ps. lxxi. 20.
n Isa. li. 17, 22.
o Isa. xi. 10.

shaken their hopes, as a city is shaken by an earthquake. Such comparisons are common in the Scriptures. ¶ *Thou hast broken it.* As if it were broken up, or convulsed. ¶ *Heal the breaches thereof.* That is, Appear for thy people, and repair their disasters, *as if* after an earthquake thou shouldst appear and fill up the rents which it had made. The prayer is that he would place things in their former condition of prosperity and success. ¶ *For it shaketh.* It is convulsed or agitated. That is, there is still commotion. Things are unsettled and disturbed. The prayer is, that there might be stability or continued success.

3. *Thou hast showed thy people hard things.* Thou hast caused them to see reverses, disappointments, and trials. This refers, according to the supposition in the Introd. to the psalm, to some calamitous events which had occurred. The probability seems to be that the Edomites may have spread desolation over the land. ¶ *Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.* The word rendered *astonishment* — תַּרְעֵלָה, *tarailah*—occurs only here and in Isa. li. 17, 22,—in both of which verses in Isaiah it is rendered *trembling.* It means properly *reeling, drunkenness;* and the idea here is, that it was as if he had given them a cup—that is, an intoxicating drink—which had caused them to reel as a drunken man; or, in other words, their efforts had been unsuccessful. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 6; Isa. li. 17.

4. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.* The word rendered *banner* — נֵס, *nais*—means properly anything elevated or lifted up, and hence a standard, a flag, a sign, or a signal. It may refer to a standard reared on lofty mountains or high places during an invasion of a country, to point out to the people a place of rendezvous or a rallying place (Isa. v. 26; xi. 12; xviii. 3); or it may refer to a standard or ensign borne by an army; or it may refer to the flag of a ship, Ezek. xxvii. 7; Isa. xxxiii. 23. Here it doubtless refers to the flag, the banner, the standard of an army; and the idea is that *God* had committed such a standard to his people that they might go forth as soldiers in his cause. They were enlisted in his service, and were fighting his battles. ¶ *That it may be displayed because of the truth.* In the cause of truth; or, in the defence of justice and right. It was not to be displayed for vain parade or ostentation; it was not to be unfolded in an unrighteous or unjust cause; it was not to be waved for the mere purpose of carrying desolation, or of securing victory; it was that a righteous cause might be vindicated, and that the honour of God might be promoted. This was the *reason* which the psalmist now urges why God should interpose and repair their disasters,—that it was *his* cause, and that they were appointed to maintain and defend it. What was true then of the people of God, is true of the church now. God has given to his church a banner or a standard that it may wage a war of justice, righteousness, and truth; that it may be employed in resisting and overcoming his enemies; that it may carry the weapons of truth and right against all injustice, falsehood, error, oppression, and wrong; that it may ever be found on the side of humanity and benevolence,—of virtue, temperance, liberty, and equality;

5 That [p] thy beloved may be delivered, save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness: I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

[p] Ps. cviii. 6, etc.

and that it may bear the great principles of the true religion to every territory of the enemy, until the whole world shall be subdued to God.

5. *That thy beloved may be delivered.* The word *beloved* is in the plural number, and might be rendered *beloved ones.* It refers not merely to David as his servant and friend, but to those associated with him. The reference is to the calamities and dangers then existing, to which allusion has been made above. The prayer is, that the enemy might be driven back, and the land delivered from their invasion. ¶ *Save* with *thy right hand.* The right hand is that by which the sword is handled, the spear hurled, the arrow drawn on the bow. The prayer is, that God would put forth his power and deliver his people. ¶ *And hear me.* Literally, *Answer* me. The answer which he desired was that God would lead his armies successfully into Edom, vers. 8, 9.

6. *God hath spoken in his holiness.* That is, as a holy God; a God who is true; a God whose promises are always fulfilled. The idea is, that the holiness of God was the public pledge or assurance that what he had promised he would certainly perform. God had made promises in regard to the land of Canaan or Palestine, as a country to be put into the possession of Abraham and his posterity. Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 15; xvii. 8; Ps. cv. 8–11. The original promise of the gift of that land, made to Abraham under the general name of *Canaan* (Gen. xii. 7), embraced the whole territory from the river (that divided the land from Egypt) to the Euphrates: "Unto thy seed [addressed to Abraham] have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates," Gen. xv. 18. This would embrace the country of *Edom*, as well as the other countries which are specified in the psalm. The natural and proper boundary of the land on the east, therefore, according to the promise, was the river Euphrates; on the west, Egypt and the Mediterranean sea; on the south, the outer limit of Edom. It was the object of David to carry out what was implied in this promise, and to secure the possession of all that had been thus granted to the Hebrews as the descendants of Abraham. Hence he had been engaged in carrying his conquests to the east, with a view to make the Euphrates the eastern border or boundary of the land: "David smote also Hadarezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, *as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates,*" 2 Sam. viii. 3. Comp. 1 Chron. xviii. 3. In the prosecution of the same purpose he was anxious also to subdue *Edom*, that the entire territory thus promised to Abraham might be put in possession of the Hebrews, and that he might transmit the kingdom in the fulness of the original grant to his posterity. It is to this *promise* made to Abraham that he doubtless refers in the passage before us. ¶ *I will rejoice.* I, David, will exult or rejoice in the prospect of success. I will find my happiness, or my confidence in what I now undertake, in the promise which God has made. The meaning is, that since God had made this promise, he would certainly triumph. ¶ *I will divide Shechem.* That is, I will divide up the whole land according to the promise. The *language* here is taken from that which was employed when the country of Canaan was conquered by Joshua, and when it was *divided* among the tribes: "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou *divide* for an inherit-

ance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them," Josh. i. 6. Comp. Josh. xiii. 6, 7; xiv. 5; xviii. 10; xix. 51; xxiii. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 55; Acts xiii. 19. David here applies the same language to *Shechem*, and *the valley of Succoth*, as portions of the land, meaning that he would accomplish the original purpose in regard to the land by placing it in possession of the people of God. *Shechem* or *Sichem* was a city within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, called by the Romans Neapolis, and now Nablûs. It is about two hours, or eight miles, south of Samaria. It seems to be mentioned here as being the spot where the law of Moses was read to the people of Israel, and especially the blessings and curses recorded in Deut. xxvii. and xxviii., which Moses commanded to be read to the different tribes on the above-named mountains, Deut. xxvii. 11–13. This was actually done, Josh. viii. 33. *Shechem*, therefore, as lying between these mountains, and as being the place where the great mass of the people were assembled to hear what was read, became a central place, a representative spot of the whole land, and to say that *that* was conquered or subdued, was to speak of that which implied a victory over the land. David speaks of having secured this, as significant of the fact that the central point of influence and power had been brought under subjection, and as in fact implying that the land was subdued. The importance of that place, and the allusion to it here, will justify a more extended reference to it, which I copy from "The Land and the Book," by Dr. Thomson, vol. ii. p. 203, 204.

"Nablûs is a queer old place. The streets are narrow, and vaulted over; and in the winter time it is difficult to pass along many of them on account of brooks which rush over the pavement with deafening roar. In this respect, I know no city with which to compare it except Brusa; and, like that city, it has mulberry, orange, pomegranate, and other trees, mingled in with the houses, whose odoriferous flowers load the air with delicious perfume during the months of April and May. Here the bilbûl delights to sit and sing, and thousands of other birds unite to swell the chorus. The inhabitants maintain that theirs is the most *musical* vale in Palestine, and my experience does not enable me to contradict them.

"Imagine that the lofty range of mountains running north and south was cleft open to its base by some tremendous convulsion of nature, at right angles to its own line of extension, and the broad fissure thus made is the vale of Nablûs, as it appears to one coming up the plain of Mukhna from Jerusalem. Mount Ebal is on the north, Gerizim on the south, and the city between. Near the eastern end, the vale is not more than sixty rods wide; and just there, I suppose, the tribes assembled to hear the 'blessings and the curses' read by the Levites. We have them *in extenso* in the 27th and 28th chapters of Deuteronomy; and in Joshua viii. we are informed that it was actually done, and how:—Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin, stood on Gerizim; and Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulon, Dan, and Naphtali, on Ebal; while all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priests which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord; the whole nation of Israel, with the women and little ones, were there. And Joshua read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings; there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel. This was, beyond question or comparison, the most august assembly the sun has ever shone upon; and I never stand in the narrow plain, with Ebal and Gerizim rising on either hand to the sky, without involuntarily recalling and reproducing the scene. I have shouted to hear the echo, and



ENTRANCE TO NABLÛS.

7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

then fancied how it must have been when the loud-voiced Levites proclaimed from the naked cliffs of Ebal, 'Cursed be the man that maketh any graven image, an abomination unto Jehovah.' And then the tremendous AMEN! tenfold louder, from the mighty congregation, rising, and swelling, and re-echoing from Ebal to Gerizim, and from Gerizim to Ebal. AMEN! even so let him be accursed. No, there never was an assembly to compare with this."

The preceding cut, taken also from "The Land and the Book," will illustrate these references to the places. ¶ *And mete out the valley of Succoth.* Measure out; that is, measure or *survey* for the purpose of "dividing" it, or assigning it to the conquerors, to the people of God, according to the promise. There is the same allusion here, as in the former clause, to the dividing of the land in the time of Joshua. Succoth, in the division of the land by Joshua, fell to the tribe of Gad; Josh. xiii. 27. It was on the east side of the river Jordan, and is now called *Sakut.* It is first mentioned in Gen. xxxiii. 17, in the account of the journey which Jacob took on returning from the East to the land of Canaan. At this place he paused in his journey, and made *booths* for his cattle; and hence the name *Succoth*, or *booths. Why* this place is referred to here by David, as representing his conquests, cannot now be ascertained. It seems most probable that it was because it was a place *east* of the Jordan, as Shechem was *west* of the Jordan, and that the *two* might, therefore, represent the conquest of the whole country. Succoth, too, though not more prominent than many other places, and though in itself of no special importance, was well known as *among* the places mentioned in history. It is *possible*, also, though no such fact is mentioned, that there may have been some transaction of special importance there in connexion with David's conquests in the East, which was well understood at the time, and which justified this special reference to it.

7. *Gilead* is *mine, and Manasseh* is *mine.* That is, My dominion or authority is extended over these regions—Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah. The *idea* here is substantially the same as in the former verse, that his dominion extended over the country on both sides of the Jordan; or that in the direction of east and west it embraced *all* that had been promised,—"from the great sea to the river Euphrates." In verse 6, this idea is expressed by selecting two *spots* or *towns* as representatives of the whole country—Shechem on the west, and Succoth on the east; in this verse, the same idea is expressed by a reference to the two *regions* so situated,—Gilead and Manasseh on the east, and Ephraim and Judah on the west. Gilead was on the east of the river Jordan, properly embracing the mountainous region south of the river Jabbok, Gen. xxxi. 21—48; Cant. iv. 1. The word has sometimes, however, a wider signification, including the whole mountainous tract between the rivers Arnon and Bashan, and thus including the region occupied by the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh, Num. xxxii. 26, 29, 39. Hence, in this place, it is put for the region occupied by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. "Manasseh" refers to the district or region occupied by the half tribe of Manasseh, on the east of the Jordan. These two portions — Gilead and Manasseh — or, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—would, therefore, embrace the whole of the land of promise, north and south, on the east of the Jordan. The limits of these regions to the *east* were properly the banks of the Euphrates; that is, the original promise would embrace this. David had gone to

8 Moab *is* my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou [1] because of me.

[1] Or, *over me:* (by an irony.)

carry the boundaries of his country to those assigned limits (2 Sam. viii. 3), and he now says that he had completed that undertaking. ¶ *Ephraim also.* Ephraim and Judah were the principal tribes on the west of the Jordan, and they would well *represent* that part of Canaan. The idea is, that the *whole* of the promised land, east and west, was now under his control. There needed only the territory of *Edom*, on the south, to complete the conquest, and place the *whole* of the promised land under his dominion, vers. 8, 9. ¶ Is *the strength of my head.* This means that Ephraim constituted his chief strength, or was that on which he mainly relied. It was that which protected him, as the helmet does the head; that on which his very life in battle depended. This honour is given to the tribe of Ephraim because it was one of the largest tribes, and because it was situated in the very centre of the land. ¶ *Judah* is *my lawgiver.* This means that the tribe of Judah, by its position, its numbers, and the prominence given to it in the prophecies (Gen. xlix. 8–12), actually gave law to the nation. Its influence was felt in all the institutions of the land. The controlling influence went out from that tribe in the time of David; and its authority in this respect was recognized, perhaps partly in anticipation of what it had been said *would be* its importance in future times:—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come." Gen. xlix. 10.

8. *Moab* is *my washpot.* Moab was a region of country on the east of the Dead Sea, extending as far north as the river Arnon. See Notes on Isa. xv. The words rendered *wash-pot* mean properly a pot or basin for washing, a wash-basin; and the expression is used here as one of contempt, as if he would use it as the meanest vessel is used. It implies that Moab was already subdued, and that the author of the psalm could make any use of it he pleased. It also implies that Moab was not regarded as adding much to his strength, or to the value of his dominions; but that, compared with other portions of his kingdom, it was of as little value as a wash-basin compared with the more valuable vessels in a house. ¶ *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.* Edom or Idumea was the country which still remained unsubdued. This David was anxious to possess, though the conquest had been delayed and prevented by the adverse circumstances to which allusion has already been made in the Notes on the psalm. On the situation of Idumea, see Notes on Isa. xxxiv. It was a region whose possession was necessary to complete the acquisition of territory that properly pertained to the Promised Land; and David was now intent on acquiring it. He here expresses the utmost confidence that he would succeed in this, notwithstanding the adverse events which had occurred. It is supposed that there is allusion in the expression "I will cast out my shoe," to the custom, when transferring a possession, of *throwing down a shoe* on the ground as a symbol of occupancy. Comp. Ruth iv. 7. In the middle ages this was expressed by throwing down a glove; in the time of Columbus, by solemnly taking possession and setting up a cross; in other times, by erecting a standard, or by building a fort. Comp. Rosenmüller, Das alte und neue Morgenland, No. 483. The idea is, that he would take possession of it, or would make it his own. ¶ *Philistia, triumph thou because of me.* On the situation of Philistia, see Notes on Isa. xi. 14. In the margin this is, "*triumph thou over me*, by an irony." It *may* be regarded as irony, or as a taunt, meaning that

9 Who will bring me *into* the [1] strong city? who will lead me into Edom.

10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? and *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?

11 Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the [2] help of man.

12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

[1] *city of strength.*

[2] *salvation.*

Philistia was no longer now in a situation to triumph over him; or it *may* be understood as referring to the exultation and shouting which would ensue on the reception of its sovereign. The former seems to be the most probable interpretation, as the language is undoubtedly intended to denote absolute *subjection*, and not the *voluntary* reception of a king. The language in the entire passage is that of triumph over foes.

9. *Who will bring me* into *the strong city?* The strong city—the fenced, the fortified city—referred to here is doubtless the capital of Idumea. This was the celebrated city *Petra*, situated in the rocks, and so difficult to be taken by an enemy. For a description of it, see Notes on Isa. xvi. 1. It was this city, as the capital of the land of Edom, which David was now so anxious to secure; and he asks, therefore, with interest, who among his captains, his mighty men, would undertake the task of conducting his armies there. ¶ *Who will lead me into Edom?* Into the capital, and thence into the whole land to subdue it. This was done under the combined command of Joab and Abishai his brother. See Notes on the title to the psalm.

10. Wilt *not thou, O God,* which *hadst cast us off?* See Notes on ver. 1. The meaning is, that although God had seemed to reject and forsake them, they had no other resource, and the appeal might be still made to him. The psalmist hoped that he would again be favourable to his people, and would not forsake them altogether. It is still true that although God may *seem* to forsake us, that although he may leave us for a time to discouragement and darkness, yet we have no other resource but himself; it is still true that we *may* hope in his mercy, and plead for his return. ¶ *And* thou, *O God,* which *didst not go out with our armies?* Who didst suffer us to be defeated. See Notes on vers. 2, 3.

11. *Give us help from trouble.* From the troubles which have now come upon us and overwhelmed us. ¶ *For vain* is *the help of man.* Marg., *salvation.* The idea is, that they would look in vain to man to assist them in their present difficulties. They must depend on God alone. What is here said of temporal troubles is true as absolutely in the matter of salvation. When we are burdened with the consciousness of guilt, and trembling under the apprehension of the wrath to come, it is not man that can aid us. Our help is in God alone. Man can neither guide, comfort, pardon, nor save; and in vain should we look to any man, or to all men, for aid. We *must* look to God alone:—to God as the only one who can remove guilt from the soul; who can give peace to the troubled heart; who can deliver us from condemnation and ruin.

12. *Through God.* By the help of God. ¶ *We shall do valiantly.* Literally, *we shall make strength.* That is, we shall gain or gather strength; we shall go forth with spirit and with courage to the war. This expresses the confident assurance that they would secure the aid of God, and that under him they would achieve the victory. ¶ *For he* it is that *shall tread down our enemies.* He will himself tread or trample them down; that is, he will enable us to do it. The psalm, therefore, though begun in despondency and sadness, closes, as the Psalms often

PSALM LXI.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah.
A Psalm of David.

HEAR my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: [q] lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.

[q] Isa. xxvi. 4 (*marg.*)

do, with confident hope; with the assurance of the favour of God; and with the firm belief that the object sought in the psalm would be obtained. The history shows that the prayer was answered; that the armies of David were successful; that Edom was subdued; and that thus the territories of the Hebrew people had, in fact, in the time of David, the boundaries promised to Abraham.

PSALM LXI.

This psalm (*title*) is inscribed "To the chief Musician upon Neginah." On the meaning of the expression, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv., where also we have the following word in another form,—"*on Neginoth*"—the plural, instead of the singular. The word means a stringed instrument; and the idea is, that the psalm was committed to the leader of those who played on stringed instruments in the sanctuary.

The psalm is ascribed to David, but the occasion on which it was composed is not specified. From the psalm itself it is evident that it was composed by one who was in exile (ver. 2), and by one who was a king (ver. 6). The supposition which best agrees with all the circumstances alluded to in the psalm is, that it was composed by David when he was driven into exile on the rebellion of Absalom, and that it was composed when he was still beyond the Jordan (2 Sam. xvii. 22), and when his life was yet in danger. The xlii. and xliii. psalms refer to the same period, and have the same general characteristics.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. A prayer for the Divine interposition, vers. 1, 2. The psalmist was far away from his home—in exile—and his heart was overwhelmed.

II. A reference to former mercies, and to the Divine interposition in other days, as a ground of hope and of pleading now, vers. 3–5.

III. An expression of confident assurance that his prayer would be heard; that his life would be preserved; that his days would be lengthened out, and that he would be delivered from danger, vers. 6, 7.

IV. The result of this deliverance; or, as an expression of gratitude for it, a purpose to devote himself to God, in a life spent in the daily performance of his vows, ver. 8.

1. *Hear my cry, O God.* See Notes on Ps. v. 2. The word rendered *cry* in this place sometimes denotes a joyful shout—a shout of triumph; but the connexion makes it certain that it here refers to the voice of prayer. It is implied that it was *audible* prayer, or that the psalmist gave utterance to his desires in words. It is language such as would be produced by deep distress; when a sad and burdened heart gives vent to its feelings in a loud cry for mercy. ¶ *Attend unto my prayer.* Give ear; incline the ear to me, Ps. v. 1; xvii. 1, 6; xxxix. 12; lxxi. 2.

2. *From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee.* This language is derived from the idea that the earth is one extended plain, and that it has limits or boundaries. Such language is common in the Scriptures, and indeed is in constant use now, even although we *know* that the earth is globular, and that there *are* no parts which can properly be called "the *ends* of the earth." The meaning is plain. The psalmist was far from the place where he was accustomed to live; or, in other words, he was in exile or in banishment. The language agrees well with the supposition that the psalm was composed when David was driven from his home and his throne by Absalom, and was in exile beyond the Jordan, 2 Sam. xvii. 22. Comp. Ps. xlii. ¶ *When my heart is overwhelmed.* The word here used—עָטַף, *ataph*—means properly to cover, as with a garment,

3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong [r] tower from the enemy.

4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will [1] trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

r Prov. xviii. 10.

1 Or, *make my refuge.*

Ps. lxxiii. 6; then, with corn—as a field, Ps. lxv. 14; then, with darkness or calamity, Ps. cii. title; Isa. lvii. 16. The meaning here is, that darkness or calamity seemed to have covered or enveloped his soul. He saw no light, he had no comfort. Comp. Ps. xlii. 3, 6, 7. ¶ *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* To *a* rock; to some place of refuge; to some stronghold where I may be safe. The allusion is to God *as* such a rock or place of refuge. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. The idea is, that he had no strength in himself; that if he depended on himself, he could not be safe. He was, as it were, in a low vale, exposed to every enemy. He wished to be put in a place of safety. To such a place of safety—to Himself—he prayed that God would lead him. We need one much higher than we are to save us. A Saviour—a Redeemer—on the same level with ourselves could not help us. We must have one that is supreme over all things; one that is Divine.

3. *For thou hast been a shelter for me.* A place of refuge; a place where I have found safety. He refers here to what had occurred in former times. God had protected him when in danger, and he pleads that fact as a reason why God should now interpose and deliver him. That reason seems to be founded on two considerations: (*a*) God had thus shown that he had *power* to deliver him; and (*b*) it might be expected that God who is unchangeable, and who had interposed, *would* manifest the same traits of character still, and would not leave him now. Both of these are proper grounds for prayer. ¶ And *a strong tower from the enemy.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

4. *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever.* This expresses the confident assurance that he would be restored to his home, and to the privileges of public worship. The word *for ever* here means *perpetually;* that is, his permanent home would be there, or he would dwell with God who dwelt in the tabernacle. The word "tabernacle" refers to the sacred tent which was erected for the worship of God, within which were the ark, the tables of the law, the table of shew-bread, etc. In the innermost part of that tent—the Holy of Holies—the symbol of the Divine presence rested on the mercy-seat or cover of the ark of the covenant. David regarded it as a great privilege to abide near that sacred tent; near to the place of public worship; near to the place where God was supposed to dwell. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvi. 8; xxvii. 4. It is possible that his mind looked beyond the tabernacle on earth to an eternal residence in the very presence of God; to his being admitted into his own sacred abode in heaven. ¶ *I will trust in the covert of thy wings.* Marg., *Make my refuge.* See Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. Comp. Ps. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1. The idea is, that he would seek and find protection in God,—as young birds do under the outstretched wings of the parent bird.

5. *For thou, O God, hast heard my vows.* That is, my prayers accompanied with solemn pledges or promises that I will devote myself to thy service. In some way David had the assurance that those vows and prayers had been heard; that God would answer his supplications,—that he would restore him to his home, and to the privilege of uniting with others in the sacred services of the sanctuary. In what way he had this assurance we are not informed, but the state-

6 Thou [1] wilt prolong the king's life; *and* his years as [2] many generations.

[1] *shalt add days to the days of the king.*

7 He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, [s] *which* may preserve him.

[2] *generation and generation.* [s] Ps. xliii. 3.

ment here accords with what we often find in the Psalms. His troubled mind became calm, for he looked upon the blessing as already granted. He entertained no doubt that what he had asked would be bestowed. The mind of a true believer often feels this assurance now. *Somehow* he feels an undoubting persuasion that the prayer which he has offered has been heard; that God will be merciful; that the blessing which has been sought will assuredly be conferred. That there may be danger of illusion here, no one can doubt,—for we are not, as David was, inspired; but no one can prove that God *may* not impart such a gracious assurance to the soul; no one can show that it is *wrong* for a believer to allow peace to flow into his soul, in the confident hope that the blessing which he had sought will be his. ¶ *Thou hast given* me *the heritage of those that fear thy name.* The *heirship* which pertains to such; the *privileges* of those who are the true children of God. One of these privileges is that of prayer; another is the peace which results from adoption into the family of God; of feeling that we are his heirs. Comp. Notes on Rom. viii. 16, 17.

6. *Thou wilt prolong the king's life.* Literally, "Days upon the days of the king thou wilt add;" that is, Thou wilt add days to those which thou hast already permitted him to live. The language does not necessarily mean that he would have a *long* life, but that he would still be permitted to live. He had apprehended death. He knew that his life was sought by those who were engaged with Absalom in the rebellion. At first it was uncertain what the issue would be. He had fled for his life. But now, in answer to prayer, he felt assured that his life would be preserved; that he would be permitted to return to his home and his throne; and that *as* king—as the sovereign of his people—he would be permitted to honour God. ¶ And *his years as many generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *generation and generation.* This probably means that he would be permitted to live longer than the ordinary time of a generation; that he would live *as if* one generation—or as if one ordinary lifetime—were added to another, so that he would live *through* successive generations of men. The average life of a generation is about thirty years. David is supposed to have lived from 1085 before the Christian era to 1016—or sixty-nine years—which would reach a *third* generation. This is a more natural interpretation of the passage than to suppose that he refers to an "*ideal*" king, or that his *dynasty* would continue for many generations.

7. *He shall abide before God for ever.* That is, perpetually; without danger of change, or of being driven into exile. This *may* allude, however, to the hope which David had that he would *always* live with God in a higher world—a world where there would be no danger of change or banishment. His restoration to his home, to his throne, and to the privileges of the sanctuary, he may have regarded as an emblem of his ultimate reception into a peaceful heaven, and his mind may have glanced rapidly from the one to the other. On earth, after his restoration, he would have no fear that he would be banished again; in heaven, of which such a restoration might be regarded as an emblem, there could be no change, no exile. ¶ *O prepare mercy and truth.* Literally, *divide,* or *divide out;* then, *allot* or *appoint;* and then, *make ready* or *prepare.* The prayer is, that God would mea-

8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

sure out to him, or impart to him, such favour that this desire of his heart would be realized. On the phrase *mercy and truth,* see Notes on Ps. xxv. 10; lvii. 3, 10. ¶ Which *may preserve him.* They will preserve him. That is, the manifestation of such mercy and truth would make his permanent occupancy of his throne on earth, and his ultimate reception into heaven, secure.

8. *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever.* As the result of this gracious interposition. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 20. The meaning is, that he would do this constantly. It would be the regular business of his life. ¶ *That I may daily perform my vows.* The solemn promises which I have made in my exile; the purposes which I have expressed to devote myself to thee. Or, the language may have been used in a more general sense, denoting that, as a religious man, the vows of God were constantly on him, or that he had pledged himself to serve God faithfully and always, and that he could better perform this duty at the tabernacle—in the place consecrated to public worship—than he could in exile. He desired, therefore, to be restored to the sanctuary, that he might keep up the performance of the daily duties of religion without interruption or hindrance. The whole psalm indicates a fervent desire to be engaged in the worship and service of God; a desire to be with Him and to enjoy His favour on earth; a confident hope that he would be permitted to enjoy His presence for ever.

PSALM LXII.

On the phrase in the title to this psalm, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv. On the expression "To Jeduthun," see Notes on the title to Ps. xxxix. Jeduthun was one of those who were appointed by David to preside over the music of the tabernacle (1 Chron. xxv. 1-3), but it is impossible now to determine why *this* psalm, and the others where his name is found in the title (xxxix. and lxxvii.), were dedicated to him, or committed to his special care. The psalm is, in the title, ascribed to David as the author, but we have no certain knowledge on what occasion it was composed. Its contents agree well with the common supposition that it is to be referred to the time of Absalom, and to the troubles which David experienced in his rebellion.

The psalm, apparently for musical purposes only, is divided into three parts, the divisions being indicated by the word *Selah,* vers. 4, 8. Another division is indicated in the original by the recurrence of the word אַךְ—*truly*—at the beginning of vers. 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, as if the mind of the author had been greatly impressed with the importance of the particular sentiment introduced by that word.

The general purpose of the psalm is to lead men to trust in God. The contents are as follows:

I. A statement of the humble trust of the author in God—trust in him as his only hope,—as his rock and his refuge, vers. 1, 2.

II. A description of his enemies and of their designs. They devised mischief; they sought to cast down others from their high places; they delighted in falsehood; they made great pretensions of friendship, but they were false in heart, vers. 3, 4.

III. A renewed expression of the confidence of the psalmist in God,—repeating what he had said in vers. 1, 2,—and reaffirming his entire trust in the Divine protection, vers. 5-7.

IV. An exhortation to others to trust in God, and not in men; whether men of high or low condition; to trust in nothing else than God:—not in power—the power of oppression; not in the robbery of others, or that which was obtained from others by violence; not in riches, in whatever way they might have been acquired, vers. 8-10.

V. Reasons for trusting in God, vers. 11, 12.

(*a*) All power belongs to him, ver. 11.
(*b*) He is merciful or kind, ver. 12.
(*c*) He is just or equitable, ver. 12.

PSALM LXII.

To the chief Musician, to *t* Jeduthun.
A Psalm of David.

TRULY [1] my soul [2] waiteth upon God; from him *cometh* my salvation.

2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my [3] defence: I shall not be *u* greatly moved.

3 How long will ye imagine

t 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 3. [1] Or, *Only*.

[2] *is silent*, Ps. lxv. 1. [3] *high place*.
u Ps. xxxvii. 24; Mic. vii. 8.

1. *Truly.* Indeed; really. The state of mind indicated by this particle is that of one who had been seriously contemplating a subject; who had looked round on his own actual condition; who had taken an estimate of all his resources, and of all his means of reliance, and who had carefully examined his own state of mind to see what was his real trust, and what were his real feelings towards God. Having done all this, he, at last, breaks out with the expression, —"My soul does sincerely confide in God; I have no other resource; I have no power to meet my foes, and I am sure—my inmost soul testifies —that my real trust is, where it ought to be, in God; I see nothing in myself on which to rely; I see so much crime, falsehood, treachery in men, that I cannot confide in them; I have had so much painful experience of their insincerity and baseness that I cannot rely on them; but I do see that in God which leads me to trust in him, and I am sure that my heart truly does rely on him." ¶ *My soul waiteth upon God.* Marg., *is silent.* Sept., "Is not my soul subject to God?" So the Latin Vulgate. Luther, "My soul is still [calm] in God." The Hebrew word—דּוּמִיָּה, *dumiyah* —means *silence, quiet, rest;* and then, a silent expectation or hope. The idea here is, "Truly towards God is the silent waiting of my soul;" that is, "In him alone do I trust; there *is* calmness of mind; I have no apprehension as to what can happen. My mind is at peace, for I feel that all is in the hands of God, and that he is worthy of entire trust and confidence." The feeling is that which exists when we have entrusted all to God; when, having entire confidence in his power, his goodness, his wisdom, his mercy, we commit the whole case to him as if it were no longer our own. Such is the calmness—the peace—the quiet—the *silence* of the soul—when all is left with God. See Notes on Isa. xxvi. 3, and Phil. iv. 6, 7. ¶ *From him* cometh *my salvation.* That is, My safety is from him; my security is with him. It is true, also, that all that is ever implied in this word *salvation,* whether pertaining to this life or the life to come, is derived from God.

2. *He only* is *my rock,* etc. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *I shall not be greatly moved.* The word *greatly* here, or *much,*—"I shall not be much moved," —implies that he did not anticipate perfect security from danger or calamity; he did not suppose that he would escape all disaster or trouble, but he felt that no *great* evil would befal him, that his most important interests were safe, and that he would be ultimately secure. He would be restored to his home and his throne, and would be favoured with future peace and tranquillity. None of us can hope wholly to escape calamity in this life. It is enough if we can be assured that our *great* interests will be ultimately secured; that we shall be safe at last in the heavenly world. Having that confidence the soul may be, and should be, calm; and we need little apprehend what will occur in this world.

3. *How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?* The original word here rendered "imagine mischief,"—from חָתַת, *hathath* — occurs only in this place. It means, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), to break in upon; to set upon; to assail:— "How long will ye break in upon a man?" that is, set upon him. So the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate.

mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence.

4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency; they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse [1] inwardly. Selah.

[1] *in their inward parts.*

It does not refer to their merely forming *purposes* of mischief against a man, but to their making *assaults* upon him; to their endeavouring to take his life or to destroy him. The address here is to the enemies of David, and the language would apply well to the attempts made upon his life by Absalom and his followers. The question here is, "*how long*" they would continue to do this; how long they would show this determined purpose to take his life; whether they would *never* cease thus to persecute him. They had already done it long; they had showed great perseverance in this course of wickedness; and he asks whether it would *never* come to an end? *Who* these persons were he does not intimate; but there can be no great danger of mistake in referring the description to Absalom and his adherents. ¶ *Ye shall be slain all of you.* Prof. Alexander renders this entire passage, "*Will ye murder* (*i.e.* seek to murder him) *all of you* (combined against a single person, who is consequently) *like a wall inclined* (or bent by violence), *a fence* (or hedge) *crushed* (broken down)." So, substantially, De Wette renders it. Those who thus interpret the passage give it an *active* signification, meaning that his enemies pressed upon him, like a wall that was bent by violence, or a fence that was likely to fall on one. The original word rendered "ye shall be slain,"—תְּרֻצָּחוּ, *teratzehhu*—is in the *active* form (Piel), and cannot without violence be rendered in the passive, as it is in our translation. But the active form may still be retained, and a consistent meaning be given to the whole passage without the forced meaning put on it in the rendering by Prof. Alexander. It is not natural to speak of enemies as so coming on a man as to make him like a falling wall, or a tottering fence. The evident idea is, that *they themselves* would be as a falling wall; that is, that they would be defeated or disappointed in their purpose, as a wall that has no solid foundation tumbles to the ground. The meaning of the original may be thus expressed: "How long will ye assail a man, that ye may put him to death? All of you shall be as a bowing wall," etc. That is, You will not accomplish your design; you will fail in your enterprise, as a wall without strength falls to the ground. ¶ *As a bowing wall.* A wall that *bows out*, or *swells out*; a wall that may fall at any moment. See Notes on Isa. xxx. 13. ¶ And as *a tottering fence.* A fence that is ready to fall; that has no firmness. So it would be with them. Their purposes would suddenly *give way*, as a fence does when the posts are rotted off, and when there is nothing to support it.

4. *They only consult to cast* him *down from his excellency.* This is the object of all their counsels and plans. They aim at one high in rank,—and their purpose, their sole purpose, is to bring him down. This would apply well to the case of David in the time of the rebellion of Absalom. ¶ *They delight in lies.* In false pretences; in secret plans of evil; in hypocritical assurances. This was eminently true of Absalom, who made use of these arts to seduce the people from allegiance to his father. 2 Sam. xv. 1–6. ¶ *They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.* They profess true attachment and zeal, but they are traitors at heart. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 3. This, too, would apply well to the conduct of Absalom and those associated with him.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him.

6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence: I shall not be moved.

7 In God *is* my salvation, and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour [v] out your heart

[v] 1 Sam. i. 15.

5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* See Notes on ver. 1. There is, in the word used here, and rendered *wait*, the same idea of *rest* or *repose* which occurs in verse 1. The meaning is, that he would commit the whole cause to God, and that his soul would thus be calm and without apprehension. ¶ *For my expectation is from him.* In verse 1, this is *salvation.* The idea here is, that all that he expected or hoped for must come from God. He did not rely on his fellow men; he did not rely on himself. God alone could deliver him, and he confidently believed that God would do it. Often are we in such circumstances that we feel that our *only* "expectation"—our only hope—is in God. All our strength fails; all our resources are exhausted; our fellow-men cannot or will not aid us; our own efforts seem to be vain; our plans are frustrated, and we are shut up to the conclusion that God alone can help us. How often is this felt by a Christian parent in regard to the conversion of his children. All his own efforts seem to be vain; all that he says is powerless; his hopes, long-cherished, are disappointed; his very prayers seem not to be heard; and he is *made* to feel that his only hope is in God—a sovereign God,—and that the whole case must be left in His hands. This state of mind, when it is fully reached, is often all that is needful in order that our desires may be granted. It is desirable that this state of mind *should be* produced; and when it *is* produced, the prayer is answered.

6. *He only* is *my rock*, etc. See Notes on ver. 2. The only difference between this verse and verse 2 is, that in this verse the word "greatly" is omitted. The psalmist declares here, in the most absolute manner, that he shall not be "moved" at all. In verse 2, he said that he would not be "*greatly* moved;" his mind would not be much or materially disturbed. The language here indicates more entire confidence—more certain conviction — showing that the slight apprehension or fear which existed in the beginning of the psalm, had been wholly dissipated, and that his mind had become *perfectly* calm.

7. *In God* is *my salvation.* See ver. 1. That is, his salvation, his safety, his anticipated deliverance, was to come only from God. ¶ *And my glory.* That in which I glory or boast; the source of all in me that is glorious or honourable. He gloried that there was such a God; he gloried that He was *his* God. ¶ *The rock of my strength.* The strong rock; the refuge that cannot be successfully assailed; where I shall feel strong and secure. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *My refuge.* That to which I may flee for safety. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 1.

8. *Trust in him at all times.* This exhortation, addressed to all persons, in all circumstances, and at all times, is founded on the personal experience of the psalmist, and on the views which he had of the character of God, as worthy of universal confidence. David had found him worthy of such confidence; he now exhorts all others to make the same trial, and to put their trust in God in like manner. What he had found God to be, all others would find him to be. His own experience of God's goodness and mercy—of his gracious interposition in the time of trouble—had been such that he could confidently exhort all others, in similar circumstances, to make the same trial of his love. ¶ *Ye people, pour out your*

before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree *are* a lie: to be laid in the balance, they *are* [1] altogether *lighter* than vanity.

10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery:

[1] Or, *alike.*

heart before him. All people. On the meaning of the phrase "pour out your heart," see Notes on Ps. xlii. 4. The idea is, that the heart becomes tender and soft, so that its feelings and desires flow out as water, and *all* its emotions, all its wishes, its sorrows, its troubles, are poured out before God. All that *is* in our hearts may be made known to God. There is not a desire which he cannot gratify; not a trouble in which he cannot relieve us; not a danger in which he cannot defend us. And, in like manner there is not a spiritual want in which he will not feel a deep interest, nor a danger to our souls from which he will not be ready to deliver us. Much more freely than to any earthly parent—to a father, *or even to a mother*—may we make mention of all our troubles, little or great, before God. ¶ *God* is *a refuge for us.* For all. For one as well as another. He is the *only* refuge; he is *all* the refuge that we need.

9. *Surely men of low degree* are *vanity.* Literally, "vanity are the sons of Adam," but the word Adam here is used evidently to represent *men,* or the race. The same word is also employed particularly to represent *common men,* or men of the humbler rank, in contradistinction to the word אִישׁ, *ish*—which is the other word used here, and rendered "men of high degree." Compare, for this use of the word, Hos. vi. 7. The same antithesis between the two words is found in Isa. ii. 9; v. 15. The idea here is, that in the great matters which pertain to us, we cannot depend on men, and that our hope—our trust—must be in God. Of men of the humbler or lower classes, it is said that they are "vanity;" that is, they are like a vain, empty, unsubstantial thing. They cannot help us. It is useless to rely on them when we most need aid. ¶ *Men of high degree* are *a lie.* Men of exalted rank, kings, princes, nobles. This does not refer to their personal character, as if they were always false, deceitful, treacherous; but the idea is, that any prospect of protection or aid from men of rank and station—from any power which they wield—is unworthy to be relied on. It is not that which we need; it is not that on which we can depend. ¶ *To be laid in the balance.* Literally, "*In the scales to go up;*" that is, they are seen to go up, or to show how *light* they are. They have no real *weight;* no real value. On the *scales* or *balance,* see Notes on Dan. v. 27. ¶ *They* are *altogether* lighter *than vanity.* They are *all* vain; single or combined, they have no power to save us. The meaning is not that if these two ranks of persons were weighed *against* each other they would both be found to be vanity; but that it is true of each and every rank of men,—high and low—whether single or combined,—that, as weighed against our interests and wants, they are nothing. All the kings of the earth with all their hosts of war, all princes and nobles with all that they can summon from the lower ranks of their people, cannot save one soul from death,—cannot deliver us from the consequences of our transgressions. God, and God alone, can do this.

10. *Trust not in oppression.* The general meaning here is, that we are not to trust in *anything* but God. In the previous verse the psalmist had stated reasons why we should not trust in *men* of any rank. In this verse he enumerates several things on which men are *accustomed* to rely, or in which they place confidence, and he

if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them.*

11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that [1] power [w] *belongeth* unto God.

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy; for [x] thou renderest to every man according to his work.

[1] Or, *strength.* [w] Rev. xix. 1. [x] 2 Cor. v. 10.

says that we should put *no* confidence in them in respect to the help which we need, or the great objects which are to be accomplished by us. The first thing mentioned is *oppression;* and the idea is, that we must not hope to accomplish our object by oppressing others; extorting their property or their service; making them by force subject to us, and subservient to our wishes. Many do this. Conquerors do it. Tyrants do it. The owners of slaves do it. ¶ *And become not vain in robbery.* That is, Do not resort to theft or robbery, and depend on that for what is needed in life. Many do. The great robbers of the world—conquerors—have done it. Thieves and burglars do it. Men who seek to defraud others of their earnings do it. They who withhold wages from labourers, and they who cheat in trade, do it. ¶ *If riches increase, set not your heart* upon them. If you become rich *without* oppression, or *without* robbery. If your riches seem to grow of themselves—for that is the meaning of the original word (comp. Mark iv. 28)—do not rely on them as being all that you require. Men are prone to do this. The rich man confides in his wealth, and supposes that he has all he needs. The psalmist says that none of these things constitute the true reliance of man. None of them can supply his real wants; none can defend him in the great perils of his existence; none can save his soul. He needs, over and above all these, a God and Saviour; and it is such a God and Saviour only that can meet the real wants of his nature.

11. *God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this.* This repetition, or this declaration that he had heard the thing *repeated,* is designed to give emphasis to what was said, or to call attention to it as particularly worthy of notice. See Notes on Job xxxiii. 14. Comp. Job xl. 5. The sentiment here *is* particularly important, or is deserving of special attention, because, as the psalmist had shown, all other resources fail, and confidence is to be placed in nothing else for that which man so much needs;—neither in men, whether of low degree or high (ver. 9); not in oppressive acts—acts of mere power; not in plunder; not in wealth, however acquired, ver. 10. ¶ *That power* belongeth *unto God.* Marg., *strength.* The idea is, that the strength which man needs—the ability to defend and to save him—is to be found in God. All else may fail, but the power of God will not fail. The result of all, therefore, should be to lead us to put our trust in God alone.

12. *Also unto thee, O Lord,* belongeth *mercy.* Power, indeed, belongs to God (ver. 11); but this is an attribute to be feared, and while, in one respect, it will inspire confidence, or while it gives us the assurance that God is *able* to defend us when all else shall fail, yet, unattended by any other attribute, it might produce only apprehension and alarm. What man, weak and sinful man, *wants* to know is not merely that God has almighty power, but *how* that power will be wielded, or with what other attributes it is combined;—whether it will be put forth to destroy or to save; to kill or to keep alive; to crush or to uphold. Man, therefore, needs the assurance that God is a benevolent Being, as really as that he is a powerful Being; that he is disposed to show mercy; that his power will be put forth in behalf of those who confide in him, and not employed against them. Hence the attribute of *mercy* is so essential to a proper conception

PSALM LXIII.

A Psalm of David, when *y* he was in the wilderness of Judah.

y 2 Sam. xvii. 29.

O GOD, thou *art* my God; early *z* will I seek thee: my soul

z Prov. viii. 17; S. Song iii. 1—3.

of God; and hence the psalm so appropriately closes by a reference to his mercy and compassion. ¶ *For thou renderest to every man according to his work.* As this stands in our version, it would seem that the psalmist regarded what is here referred to as a manifestation of *mercy*. Yet the "rendering to every man according to his work" is an act of *justice* rather than of *mercy*. It is probable, therefore, that the word rendered "for"—כִּי, *ki*—does not refer here to either of the attributes mentioned exclusively—either *power* or *mercy*—but is to be understood with reference to the general course of argument in the psalm, as adapted to lead to confidence in God. The fact that he is a God who will deal impartially with mankind, or who will regard what is right and proper to be done in view of the characters of men, *is* a reason why they should confide in God,—since there could be no just ground of confidence in a Being who is not thus impartial and just. All these combined—power, mercy, equity—constitute a reason why men should confide in God. If either of these were wanting in the Divine character, man could have no confidence in God. If these things *do* exist in God, unlimited confidence may be placed in him as having all needful *power* to save; as being so *merciful* that sinful men may trust in him; and as being so *just* and *equal* in his dealings that all may feel that it is right to repose confidence in a Being by whom all the interests of the universe will be secured. Comp. 1 John i. 9.

PSALM LXIII.

This psalm purports to be a "psalm of David," and there can be no just ground of doubt in regard to the correctness of the title in this respect. De Wette indeed supposes that the way in which mention is made of the "king" in ver. 11, seems to indicate that the psalm was not composed by David himself, but that it was written by some friend of his, who was his companion in the troubles which he experienced; but it is not necessary to resort to this supposition, for it is not very uncommon for an author to refer to himself in the third person, as Cæsar does everywhere. The psalm further purports to have been composed by David "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." The "wilderness of Judah" was that wild and uncultivated tract of country lying on the east side of the territory of the tribe of Judah, commonly called "the wilderness of Judea" (Matt. iii. 1; comp. Notes on Matt. iv. 1), lying along the Jordan. David was repeatedly driven into that wilderness in the time of Saul; and the general structure of the psalm would accord well with any one of those occasions; but the mention of the "king" in ver. 11, as undoubtedly meaning David, makes it necessary to refer the composition of the psalm to a later period in his life, since the title "*king*" was not given to him in the time of Saul. The psalm, therefore, was doubtless composed in the time of Absalom—the period when David was driven away by the rebellion, and compelled to seek a refuge in that wilderness. It belongs, if this view is correct, to the same period in the life of David as Psalms xlii., xliii., lxi., and probably some others.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. An expression of earnest desire to see the power and glory of God again, as he had formerly done in the sanctuary, vers. 1, 2.

II. His sense of the goodness of God, and of the value of the Divine favour, as being greater than that of life; and his purpose to find his happiness in God, and to praise and bless him in all situations, especially in those moments of solemn meditation when he was alone upon his bed, vers. 3–6.

III. His remembrance of former mercies, and his conviction that God still upheld him by his right hand, vers. 7, 8.

IV. His firm belief that all his enemies would be destroyed, vers. 9–11.

1. *O God, thou* art *my God.* The words here rendered *God* are not the

thirsteth [a] for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and [1] thirsty land [2] where no water is;

2 To see [b] thy power and thy

[a] Ps. xlii. 2; John vii. 37.
[1] *weary.*
[2] *without water,* Isa. xli. 17.
[b] Ps. xxvii. 4.

same in the original. The first one—*Elohim*—is in the plural number, and is the word which is usually employed to designate God (Gen. i. 1); the second—אֵל, *ail*—is a word which is very often applied to God with the idea of *strength,*—a strong, a mighty One; and there is probably this underlying idea here, that God was the source of his strength, or that in speaking of God as *his* God, he was conscious of referring to him as Almighty. It was the Divine attribute of *power* on which his mind mainly rested when he spoke of him as *his* God. He did not appeal to him merely *as* God, with no reference to a particular attribute; but he had particularly in his eye his *power* or his ability to deliver and save him. In Ps. xxii. 1, where, in our version, we have the same expression, "My God, my God," the two words in the original are identical, and are the same which is used here—אֵל, *ail*—as expressive of strength or power. The idea suggested here is, that in appealing to God, while we address him as our God, and refer to his general character as God, it is not improper to have in our minds some *particular* attribute of his character—power, mercy, love, truth, faithfulness, etc.—as the special ground of our appeal. ¶ *Early will I seek thee.* The word here used has reference to the early dawn, or the morning; and the noun which is derived from the verb, means *the aurora, the dawn, the morning.* The proper idea, therefore, would be that of seeking God in the morning, or the early dawn; that is, as the first thing in the day. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxvi. 9. The meaning here is, that he would seek God as the first thing in the day; first in his plans and purposes; first in all things. He would seek God before other things came in to distract and divert his attention; he would seek God when he formed his plans for the day, and before other influences came in, to control and direct him. The favour of God was the supreme desire of his heart, and that desire would be indicated by his making him the earliest—the first—object of his search. His first thoughts,—his best thoughts,—therefore, he resolved should be given to God. A desire to seek God as the *first* object in life—in youth—in each returning day—at the beginning of each year, season, month, week—in all our plans and enterprises—is one of the most certain evidences of true piety; and religion flourishes *most* in the soul, and flourishes *only* in the soul, when we make God the first object of our affections and desires. ¶ *My soul thirsteth for thee.* See Notes on Ps. xlii. 2. ¶ *My flesh longeth for thee.* All my passions and desires—my whole nature. The two words—"soul" and "flesh," are designed to embrace the entire man, and to express the idea that he longed supremely for God; that all his desires, whether springing directly from the soul, or the wants of the body, rose to God as the only source from which they could be gratified. ¶ *In a dry and thirsty land.* That is, As one longs for water in a parched desert, so my soul longs for God. The word *thirsty* is in the margin, as in Heb., *weary.* The idea is that of a land where, from its parched nature—its barrenness—its rocks—its heat—its desolation—one would be faint and weary on a journey. ¶ *Where no water is.* No running streams; no gushing fountains; nothing to allay the thirst.

2. *To see thy power and thy glory.* The reference here is to what was manifested of the presence and the power of God in the services of public worship;—the praises, the prayers, the rejoicings, the evidences of the Divine presence. ¶ *So* as *I have*

glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the [c] sanctuary.

3 Because thy loving-kindness *is* [d] better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied

c Ps. lxxxiv. 2; Isa. lx. 13.
d Ps. xxx. 5.

seen thee in the sanctuary. At the tabernacle, amidst the solemn services of Divine worship. There seems to be no reason for supposing that he here refers to the mere *external* pomp and splendour of public worship, but he doubtless includes the power of the Divine presence which he had felt in such services on his own soul. As applied now to a place of *Christian* worship, it may be observed that there are nowhere more striking exhibitions of the *power* of God on earth than those which occur in such a place, especially in a revival of religion. The scene on the day of Pentecost was as striking an exhibition of the *power* of God as that which goes forth in the fury of the storm, in the raging of the ocean, or in the guidance of the heavenly bodies. Nothing can so well express what occurs in such a scene as the words "*power*" and "glory;" nothing shows more certainly the *power* of God than that influence which bows down haughty sinners, and makes them humble; which produces a deep stillness and awe in the assembled multitudes; which extorts the cry, "Men and brethren, what *must* we do to be saved?" which makes hardened men weep, and men long addicted to habits of sin willing to abandon their iniquities, and turn to God:—and nothing shows more clearly the "*glory*" of God than that power, that grace, that mercy, which thus turns multitudes from the ways of sin and death, and directs their feet into the path of peace and salvation. They who have ever witnessed the power of God in a revival of religion, will ever afterwards long to see again "the power and glory" of God, as they "*have* seen" it "in the sanctuary."

3. *Because thy loving-kindness* is *better than life.* Thy favour; thy mercy. This is of more value than life; more to be desired than life. *Life* is the most valued and valuable thing pertaining to this world which we can possess. See Notes on Job ii. 4. But, above this, David valued the favour and friendship of God. If one or the other was to be sacrificed, he preferred that it should be his life; he would be willing to exchange that for the favour of God. Life was not desirable, life furnished no comforts—no joys—without the Divine favour.

"My life itself, without Thy love,
No taste of pleasure could afford;
'Twould but a tiresome burden prove,
If I were banished from the Lord."

¶ *My lips shall praise thee.* That is either (*a*) because of this loving-kindness;—because I *have* this trust in thy character; or (*b*) because thou *wilt* restore me to the place of public worship, and I shall be *permitted* again to praise thee. Probably the latter is the true idea.

4. *Thus will I bless thee while I live.* In my life; or, as long as life lasts, will I praise thee. The word "*thus*" refers to the sentiment in the previous verse, meaning that as the result of his deep sense of the value of the loving-kindness of God, he would praise him through all the remainder of his life, or would never cease to praise him. A true purpose of serving God embraces the whole of this life, and the whole of eternity. He who loves God, and who has any proper sense of his mercy, does not anticipate a time when he will cease to praise and bless him, or when he will have any desire or wish *not* to be engaged in his service. ¶ *I will lift up my hands in thy name.* In solemn prayer and praise. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 2.

5. *My soul shall be satisfied.* See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 8. The idea is, that his soul now longed for the ser-

e as *with* [1] marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:

6 When I remember thee upon my *f* bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night*-watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8 My soul followeth hard after

e Matt. v. 6. [1] *fatness.* *f* S. Song v. 2.

vice of God as one who is hungry longs for food, or as one who is thirsty longs for drink; and that the time would come when this longing desire would be satisfied. He would engage in the service of God as he desired to do; he would be permitted to enjoy that service without interruption. ¶ *As* with *marrow and fatness.* See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 8. The words here employed denote rich food; and the comparison is between the pleasure of serving God, and the satisfaction derived from food when one is hungry. It is not uncommon to compare the pleasures of religion with a feast or banquet. Comp. Isa. xxv. 6. ¶ *And my mouth shall praise* thee *with joyful lips.* Lips full of joy; or, which give utterance to the joy of the heart.

6. *When I remember thee upon my bed.* See Notes on Ps. xlii. 8. That is, when I lie down at night; when I compose myself to sleep. Nothing can be more proper than that our last thoughts, as we sink into quiet slumber, should be of God;—of his being, his character, his mercy, his loving-kindness; of the dealings of his providence, and the manifestations of his grace towards us, during the day; and nothing is better fitted to compose the mind to rest, and to induce quiet and gentle slumber, than the calmness of soul which arises from the idea of an Infinite God, and from confidence in him. Often when restless on our beds,—when nothing else will lull the body to rest, the thought of God,—the contemplation of his greatness, his mercy, and his love—the sweet sense of an assurance of his favour will soothe us, and cause us to sink into gentle repose. So it may be—so it will be—when we are about to sleep the long sleep of death, for then the most appropriate thoughts—the thoughts that will best prepare us *for* that long sleep—will be thoughts of God. ¶ And *meditate on thee in the* night-*watches.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2. The word *watches* here refers to the ancient divisions of the night for municipal or military purposes,—periods of the night assigned to different persons to keep *watch* around a camp or city. The most common division of the night was into three parts, though the arrangement varied at different times. See Matt. xiv. 25; Luke xii. 38.

7. *Because thou hast been my help.* Because thou hast interposed to defend me in danger. The idea is, that he had experienced the Divine interposition in times of danger, and that this was a reason why he should still confide in God. The argument is, that God's mercy and favour in the past is a reason why we should confide in him in time to come. ¶ *Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* Under the shadow or protection of thy wings will I feel safe. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. Comp. Ps. xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4.

8. *My soul followeth hard after thee.* The word here used—דָּבַק, *dabak*—means properly to cleave to; to adhere; to be glued to; to stick fast. Then it means to attach oneself to anything; and then, to pursue or follow after. The idea here is that of adhering to, or cleaving to; and the meaning is, that the psalmist adhered firmly to God, as pieces of wood glued together adhere to each other; that he, as it were, *stuck fast* to him; that he would not leave him or be separated from him. The language represents the feelings of true piety in adhering firmly and constantly to

thee: thy [g] right hand upholdeth me.

9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

[g] Ps. xviii. 35.

10 They shall [1] fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for foxes.

11 But the king shall rejoice

[1] *make him run out* like water *by the hands of the sword.*

God, whatever there may be that tends to separate us from him. The adhesion of bodies by *glue* is a striking but not an adequate representation of the firmness with which the soul adheres to God. Portions of matter held together by glue *may be* separated; the soul of the true believer never *can be* separated from God. ¶ *Thy right hand upholdeth me.* The right hand is that by which we accomplish anything; and, by constant use, is stronger than the left hand. Hence the expression is equivalent to saying that God upheld him with all his strength. The meaning is, that God sustained him in life; defended him in danger; kept him from the power of his enemies.

9. *But those* that *seek my soul to destroy* it. Who seek my *life;* who endeavour to kill me. This language would well describe the purposes of Absalom and his followers. ¶ *Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.* Shall descend into the earth; into the deepest graves. He would live; but they would perish.

10. *They shall fall by the sword.* Marg., *They shall make him run out like water by the hands of the sword.* The word rendered in the text "they shall fall," and in the margin "they shall make him run out" — נָגַר, *nagar*—means properly, to flow, to pour out, as water; and then, to pour out; then, to give up or deliver. The idea here is that of delivering over, as one pours out water from a basin or pitcher: they shall be delivered over to the sword. The original rendered "*sword*" is, as in the margin, "by the hands of the sword;" that is, the sword is represented as accomplishing its purpose *as if* it had hands. The sword shall slay them. ¶ *They shall be a portion for foxes.* The original word — שׁוּעָל, *shual* — means properly and commonly *a fox.* But under this general name *fox,* the Orientals seem to have comprehended other animals also, having some resemblance to a fox, and particularly *jackals.* Thus jackals seem to be meant in Judges xv. 4; since foxes are with great difficulty taken alive; and in this place also it has the same meaning, inasmuch as foxes do not feast on dead bodies, though a favourite repast of the jackal. Gesenius, *Lex.* Comp. Bochart Hieroz. T. ii. p. 190, ed. Lips. Jackals are wild, fierce, savage; they howl around dwellings at night, —producing most hideous music, beginning "in a sort of solo, a low, long-drawn wail, rising and swelling higher and higher until it quite overtops the wind," (Thomson's "Land and the Book," i. 133),—and ready to gather at any moment when there is prey to be devoured. "These sinister, guilty, wo-begone brutes, when pressed with hunger, gather in gangs among the graves, and yell in rage, and fight like fiends over their midnight orgies; but on the battle-field is their great carnival. Oh! let me never even dream that any one dear to me has fallen by the sword, and lies there to be torn, and gnawed at, and dragged about by these hideous howlers." The following engraving, taken from the "Land and the Book," represents them.

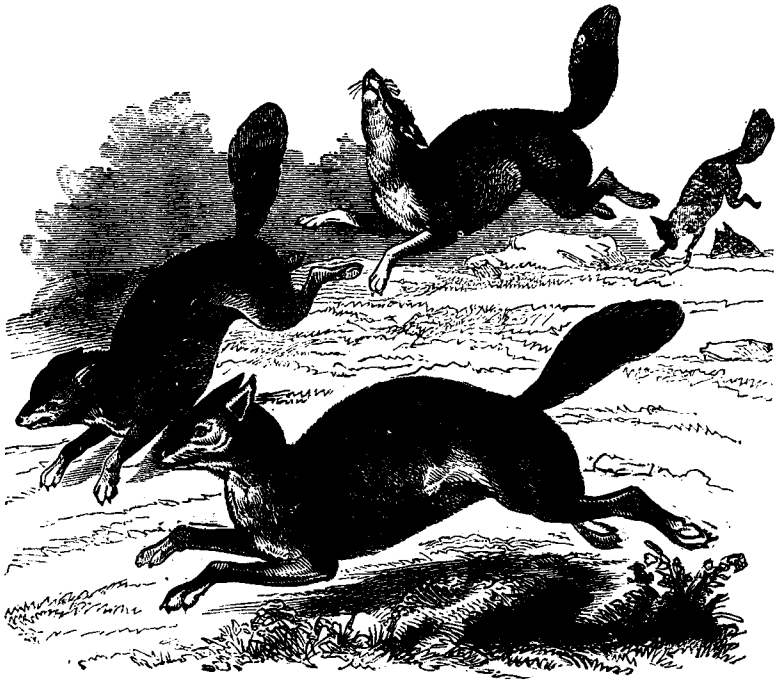
11. *But the king shall rejoice in God.* This passage, as was remarked in the Introd. to the psalm, shows that this psalm could not have been composed in the time of Saul, since the title *king* was not then given to David. The use of the term here in the third person does not prove that the psalm could not have been written

in God; every one that sweareth [h] by him shall glory: but the mouth of them [i] that speak lies shall be stopped.

[h] Isa. lxv. 16.

[i] Ps. lv. 21, 23.

by David himself, for he may have spoken of himself simply as "*the* king," and all the more forcibly and properly as he was driven unjustly from his throne, and was now an exile, yet was still *a king—the* king. The title was his; the throne belonged to him, and not to Absalom who had driven him from it. It was not improper to allude to this fact in the manner in which it is referred to here, and to say that "*the* king"—the true, the real king—himself—should and would rejoice in God. He would find God to be his helper; and by God he would yet be restored to his throne. ¶ *Every one that sweareth by him shall glory.* Every one that sweareth *to* him, or maintains his oath of allegiance to him, shall be honoured. ¶ *But the mouth of them that speak lies.* All who have sworn falsely; all who have professed allegiance and have proved unfaithful; all those who, contrary to their oaths and their obligations, have been found in the rebellion. They shall not be permitted to exult or rejoice, but they shall be confounded and silenced. This expresses, therefore, the fullest confidence in God; the absolute belief of David that he would be again placed on his throne, and again permitted "to see the power and glory of God as" he *had* "seen it in the sanctuary" (ver. 2); the belief that he would be restored to prosperity, and that his enemies would be humbled and destroyed.—So it will be with all who put their trust in



JACKALS.

PSALM LXIV.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

HEAR my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel [k] of the wicked: from

[k] Gen. xlix. 6.

God. There is certain joy and triumph for them, if not in this world, at least in the world to come.

PSALM LXIV.

This psalm is described as a "psalm of David," and it bears internal evidence that it was composed by him, as it contains first, a prayer for deliverance from enemies (vers. 1-6); and second, a confident expectation of deliverance, vers. 7-10; a form of structure found in many of the psalms written by David. It is addressed, or dedicated, as many others are, "To the chief Musician." This fact shows that it was not designed as an expression of mere private feeling, but was intended to be employed in the worship of God. See Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv.

The occasion on which this psalm was composed is unknown. In its general structure and character, it bears a strong resemblance to Ps. lviii. Indeed, many of the expressions in the two psalms are the same, and it would seem probable that it was composed with reference to the same occasion, or that the circumstances in the two cases were so similar as to make the same expressions in the main appropriate. The occasion may have been, either the times of persecution under Saul, or the rebellion of Absalom. Perhaps we may suppose, without impropriety, that the former psalm (lviii.) was composed in the time of Saul, and this in the time of Absalom, and that the circumstances in the two cases were so similar, that the author found the same phraseology which he had used on the former occasion to be appropriate to his present position, or that his feelings were so identical now with what they were then, that he naturally expressed himself in substantially the same language.

The psalm, as observed above, is composed of two parts:—

I. A prayer for deliverance from his enemies, with a description of their character, vers. 1-6.

II. An expression of confident expectation that his prayer would be answered, and that God would interpose in his behalf, vers. 7-10.

1. *Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer.* The use of the word *voice* here would seem to imply that this was *audible* prayer, or that, though alone, he gave utterance to his petitions aloud. We have this same use of the word often in the Psalms, making it probable that even private prayers were uttered in an audible manner. In most cases, when there is no danger of being overheard, or of its being construed as ostentation or Pharisaism, this is favourable to the spirit of secret devotion. Comp. Notes on Daniel vi. 10. The word here rendered *prayer* means properly speech, discourse; then, complaint; then, meditation. It is most *commonly* rendered *complaint.* See Job vii. 13; ix. 27; x. 1; xxi. 4; Ps. lv. 2 (*Notes*); Ps. cii. (*Title*); Ps. cxlii. 2. It refers here to a state of mind caused by trouble and danger, when the deep *meditation* on his troubles and dangers found expression in audible words—whether those words were complaint or petition. As there are no indications in the psalm that David was disposed to complain in the sense of *blaming* God, the proper interpretation here is that his deep meditations took the form of *prayer.* ¶ *Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.* Either Saul or Absalom. He prayed that his life might be made so secure that he would not have occasion to be afraid of his enemy.

2. *Hide me.* Or, more literally, *thou wilt hide me.* There is both an implied prayer that this might be done, and a confident belief that it would be done. The idea is, Protect me; guard me; make me safe—as one is who is hidden or concealed so that his enemies cannot find him. ¶ *From the secret counsel.* The word here used — סוֹד, *sodh*—means properly *couch, cushion;* and then, a *divan,* a

the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.

3 Who [l] whet their tongue like a sword, *and* bend *their bows*

l Jer. ix. 3.

to shoot their arrows, *even* bitter words:

4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

circle of friends sitting together on couches for familiar conversation, or for counsel. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 14; lv. 14; comp. Job xv. 8; xxix. 4. Here the reference is to the consultations of his enemies for the purpose of doing him wrong. Of course, as they took this counsel together, he could not know it, and the word *secret* is not improperly applied to it. The idea here is, that although *he* did not know what that counsel or purpose was, or what was the result of their consultations, yet *God* knew, and he could guard him against it. ¶ *Of the wicked.* Not the wicked in general, but his particular foes who were endeavouring to destroy him. Luther renders this, "from the *assembling* of the wicked." ¶ *From the insurrection.* The word here used — רִגְשָׁה, *rigsha* — means properly a *noisy crowd, a multitude.* The allusion is to such a crowd, such a disorderly and violent rabble, as constituted a *mob.* He was in danger not only from the secret purposes of the more calm and thoughtful of his enemies who were *plotting* against him, but from the excited passions of the multitude, and thus his life was in double danger. If he escaped the one, he had no security that he would escape the other. So the Redeemer was exposed to a double danger. There was the danger arising from the secret plottings of the Scribes and Pharisees assembled in council, and there was also the danger arising from the infuriated passions of the multitude. The former calmly laid the plan for putting him to death by a judicial trial; the others took up stones to stone him, or cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!"—The word *insurrection* here does not well express the idea. The word *tumult* would better represent the meaning of the original. ¶ *Of the workers of iniquity.* That is, of those who were arrayed against him.

3. *Who whet their tongue like a sword.* Who sharpen their tongue; that is, they utter words that will *cut deep,* or *penetrate* the soul. The idea is that of slander or reproach—the same idea which we have in Shakespeare (Cymbeline),—

> "'Tis slander;
> Whose edge is sharper than the sword."

This comparison is a favourite one with David. Comp. Ps. lii. 2; lvii. 4; lix. 7. ¶ And *bend* their bows, etc. That is, they *prepare* for this,—as they make ready to shoot who bend their bows, and fix their arrows on the string. The idea here is, that this was *deliberate,* or was the result of counsel and purpose. It was not an outbreak of mere passion and excitement; it was by fixed design and careful preparation. See Notes on Ps. xi. 2; lviii. 7. ¶ Even *bitter words.* We apply the same term *bitter* now to words of malice and reproach.

4. *That they may shoot in secret.* From an unobserved quarter; from a place where they are so concealed that it cannot be known where the arrows come from. There was a purpose to ruin him, and at the same time to conceal themselves, or not to let him know from what source the ruin came. It was not an open and manly fight, where he could see his enemy, but it was a warfare with a concealed foe. ¶ *At the perfect.* At the upright; at one who is *perfect* so far as his treatment of *them* is concerned. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 20, 23. ¶ *Suddenly do they shoot at him.* At an unexpected time, and from an unlooked-for quarter. They accomplish what they intended; they carry out their design. ¶ *And fear not.* They feel confident that they are not

5 They [m] encourage themselves *in* an evil [1] matter: they commune [2] of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

6 They search out iniquities; [3] they accomplish [4] a diligent search: both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

7 But God shall shoot at them

m Prov. i. 11—13. 1 Or, *speech.* 2 *To hide.*

3 Or, *we are consumed by that which they have throughly searched.*
4 *a search searched.*

known, and that they will not be detected. They have no fear of God or man. Comp. Ps. lv. 19.

5. *They encourage themselves.* Literally, *they strengthen themselves*, or make themselves strong. That is, they take counsel; they encourage each other; they urge one another forward; they suggest to each other methods by which what they purpose may be done, and by which difficulties may be overcome. This was a part of their "secret counsel" or their consultation, ver. 2. ¶ In *an evil matter.* Marg., as in Heb., *speech.* The reference is to their purpose or plan. They strengthen themselves for doing what they know to be a wrong or wicked thing. ¶ *They commune.* Literally, *they tell* or *speak.* That is, they tell each other how it may be done, or suggest different methods by which it may be successfully accomplished. They compare views, that they may select that which will be most likely to be successful. All this indicates plan, consultation, design. ¶ *Of laying snares privily.* Marg., as in Heb., *to hide snares.* This is a figure derived from the method of taking wild beasts. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15; xxxviii. 12. The reference here is to some *secret* plan by which they intended that the author of the psalm should be *entrapped* and ruined. It was not a plan of open and manly warfare, but a purpose to destroy him when he would have no opportunity of defence. ¶ *They say, Who shall see them?* That is, Who will see the *snares* or *pit-falls?* Who will be aware of their existence? They sought to make the plan so secret that no one could discover it, or even suspect it; to keep it so concealed that he for whom it was intended could not be put on his guard. Comp. Ps. x. 8, 9.

6. *They search out iniquities.* They search deep; they examine plans; they rack their invention to accomplish it. The original word—חָפַשׂ, *khaphas*—is a word which is used to denote the act of *exploring*—as when one searches for treasure, or for anything that is hidden or lost—implying a deep and close attention of the mind to the subject. So here they examined every plan, or every way which was suggested to them, by which they could hope to accomplish their purpose. ¶ *They accomplish.* This would be better translated by rendering it, "We have perfected it!" That is, We have found it out; it is complete;—meaning that they had found a plan to their liking. It is the language of self-congratulation. ¶ *A diligent search.* Or rather, "The search is a deep search." In other words, "The plan is a consummate plan; it is just to our mind; it is exactly what we have sought to find." This, too, is language of self-congratulation and satisfaction at the plan which they had thought of, and which was so *exactly* to their mind. ¶ *Both the inward* thought. Literally, *the inside;* that is, the hidden design. ¶ *And the heart.* The plan formed in the heart; the secret purpose. ¶ Is *deep.* A deep-laid scheme; a plan that indicates profound thought; a purpose that is the result of consummate sagacity. This is the language of the author of the psalm. He admitted that there had been great talent and skill in the formation of the plan. Hence it was that he cried so earnestly to God.

7. *But God shall shoot at them* with *an arrow.* That is, Instead of

with an arrow; suddenly [1] shall they be wounded.

8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God:

[1] *their wound shall be.*

their being able to carry out their purposes of shooting the arrows which they had prepared against others, *God* will shoot his arrows against *them*. The tables will be turned. They themselves will experience what they had intended to inflict on others. God will deal with them as they intended to deal with others. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Ps. vii. 15; see Notes on that passage. It is also in accordance with what we often find in the writings of David, when in the close of a psalm he expresses a confident expectation that the prayer which he had offered in the beginning *would* be heard, or rejoices in the assurance that he *had* been heard.—The idea, also, is involved in this part of the psalm that God will deal with men as they purpose to deal with others; that is, according to their true character. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 25, 26. ¶ *Suddenly shall they be wounded.* Marg., *their wound shall be.* The Hebrew is, "Suddenly shall be their wounds." The idea is, that the wounds in the case would be *theirs;* and would be inflicted suddenly. The blows which they thought to give to others would come on themselves, and this would occur at an unexpected moment.

8. *So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.* In verse 3, their tongue is represented as a *sword;* and here, keeping up the figure, the tongue, as a sword, is represented as falling on *them*, or as inflicting the wound on themselves which they had intended to inflict on others. This *might* be rendered, "And they have cast him down; upon them is their own tongue;" or, "Upon them their own tongue has come." That is, some one would cast them down, and they would fall as if smitten by their own tongue like a sword. It is not said *who* would do this, but the most natural interpretation is that it would be done by God. The idea is, that the instrument which they had employed to injure others would be the means of their own ruin. ¶ *All that see them shall flee away.* Comp. Ps. xxxi. 11. That is, they shall flee in consternation from those who are so fearfully overthrown. They shall see that God is just, and that He will punish the wicked; and they will desire to escape from a ruin so dreadful as that which comes upon the ungodly. The idea is, that when God punishes sinners, the effect on others is, and should be, to lead them to wish *not* to be associated with such men, but to escape from a doom so fearful.

9. *And all men shall fear.* That is, a deep impression would be made, not only on the associates and companions of the wicked, but on all that should hear of what was done. Men, in view of the just punishment of the wicked, would learn to reverence God, and to stand in awe of One so powerful and so just. Judgments, punishment, wrath, are adapted and designed to make a deep impression on mankind. On this principle, the final punishment of the wicked will make a deep and salutary impression on the universe FOR EVER. ¶ *And shall declare the work of God.* Shall make it known to others. It will become a subject of conversation, or they will *talk* about it, as illustrating the Divine perfections and character. Such *should always be* the effect of the judgments of God, for they illustrate his true character; they make known his attributes; they convey to the world lessons of the utmost importance. Nothing is more proper than to *talk about* the judgments of God, and to endeavour to derive from

for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

them the instructions which they are *adapted* to convey about the Divine nature, and the principles of the administration under which the universe is placed. Wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, conflagrations, inundations, diseases, *all* teach important lessons about God; and each one bears its own peculiar message to mankind. ¶ *For they shall wisely consider of his doing.* They shall attentively and carefully consider it; they shall endeavour to derive such lessons from his dealings as they are fitted to convey. In other words, an attentive consideration of his doings will contribute to maintain a just knowledge of him in the world, and to keep the world in subjection to him. God is thus *always* speaking to men; and nothing is more proper for men than to give their minds to a careful consideration of what is really intended to be *taught* us by the events which are occurring in his providential dealings.

10. *The righteous shall be glad in the* LORD, *and shall trust in him.* That is, As the result of his gracious intervention, or as the effect of his judgments on the wicked, the righteous will rejoice on account of their own security, and put their trust in One who has thus shown himself to be the friend of holiness, and the enemy of sin. Whatever tends to reveal the Divine character, or to make a proper exhibition of that character, will also lead good men to confide in God, and to feel that they are safe. ¶ *And all the upright in heart shall glory.* Shall rejoice; shall feel that they have cause for trust and triumph. The good—the pure—the righteous—the godly—will always rejoice in everything which tends to show that God is just, and true, and holy;—for all their own hope of security and salvation rests upon the fact that the God in whom they trust is a righteous God.

PSALM LXV.

This also purports to be a psalm of David. It is dedicated to "the chief Musician," or committed to him to be set to appropriate music for the public worship of God. See Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv. It is described as both "*a psalm*," and "*a song*." It is not easy to account for this double appellation, or to distinguish between the meaning of these words, though *probably* the real distinction is that the former word—*psalm*—refers to that to which it is applied, considered merely as a *poem* or *composition*; the latter—*song*—is applied with reference to its being *sung* in public worship. See Introd. to Ps. xlviii.

Though the psalm is ascribed to David, and though there is nothing in its general character which is inconsistent with this supposition, yet it has been maintained by De Wette and some others that the expressions in ver. 4 demonstrate that the psalm was composed *after* the temple was erected. The ground of this supposition is, that the words "*courts*," "*house*," and "*holy temple*," occurring in that verse, are applicable only to the temple. This, however, is not decisive, for all these words *may* have been used in reference to the tabernacle, or to the tent which David erected on Mount Zion (2 Chron. i. 4), and where he was accustomed to worship. Comp. Notes on ver. 4. If this is so, then there is nothing to forbid the supposition that the psalm was composed by David. Comp. also Notes on ver. 1.

The occasion on which it was written is not indicated in the title, and it is impossible now to determine it. It would seem from the psalm itself to have been composed after a copious and much-needed *rain*, perhaps after a long drought, when the earth was again refreshed by showers from heaven. The language, however, is of so general character that it *may* have had no particular reference to any recent event in the time of the psalmist, but may have been suggested, like Ps. civ., by a general contemplation of the power and the beneficence of God as manifested in his providential dealings. Possibly it may have been a song composed for some

PSALM LXV.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm *and* Song of David.

[1] *is silent,* Ps. lxii. 1.

PRAISE [1] waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2 O thou that hearest prayer,

annual occasion, recounting the acts of God in the revolving seasons of the year —the *general* reasons which his people had to praise him. It evidently refers to some public solemnity—some acts of praise to be rendered to God in his house (ver. 1, 4), and would be eminently appropriate when his people approached him in an annual *thanksgiving.*

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. The blessedness of praising God, or of coming before him, in his house, with the language of prayer and praise, vers. 1-4. (*a*) Praise "waits" for God; (*b*) he is the hearer of prayer; (*c*) he alone can cleanse the soul from sin; (*d*) it is a blessed privilege to be permitted to come before him, and to dwell in his courts.

II. The things for which he is to be praised, vers. 5-13.

(1) He is to be praised for the exhibitions of his *power,* or as the Almighty God; as one who answers the prayers of his people by heavy judgments; as one who shows that all may have confidence in him, on the earth and on the sea; as one who makes the mountains firm, who stills the noise of the waves, who calms the tumults of the people, who displays the tokens of his power everywhere, and makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, vers. 5-8.

(2) For his *beneficence,* especially in sending down refreshing rains upon the earth, and causing the corn to spring up, the grass to grow, and the hills to rejoice on every side, vers. 9-13.

1. *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion.* That is, all the arrangements are made; the people are assembled; their hearts are prepared to praise thee. The fact that *Zion* is here mentioned as the seat of praise would seem to imply that this psalm was composed *before* the building of the temple, contrary to the opinion of De Wette and others, as noticed in the Introd. to the psalm; for after the building of the temple the seat of worship was transferred from Mount *Zion,* where David had placed the ark and prepared a tent for it (1 Chron. xv. 1; xvi. 1; 2 Chron. i. 4), to Mount Moriah. It is true that the general name *Zion* was given familiarly to Jerusalem as a city, but it is also true that the particular place for the worship of God in the time of David was Mount Zion strictly so called. See Notes on Ps. ii. 6. The margin in this place is, "Praise *is silent.*" The Hebrew is, "To thee is silence-praise,"—a kind of compound phrase, not meaning "*silent praise,*" but referring to a condition where everything is ready; where the preparations have been entirely made; where the *noise* usually attendant on preparation has ceased, and all is in readiness *as if waiting* for that for which the arrangements had been carried forward. The noise of building—of preparation—was now hushed, and all was calm. The *language* here would also denote the state of feeling in an individual or an assembly, when the heart was *prepared* for praise; when it was filled with a deep sense of the majesty and goodness of God; when all feelings of anxiety were calmed down, or were in a state of *rest;* when the soul was ready to burst forth in expressions of thanksgiving, and nothing would meet its wants *but* praise. ¶ *And unto thee shall the vow be performed.* See Notes on Ps. xxii. 25; l. 14; lvi. 12. The reference here is to the vows or promises which the people had made in view of the manifested judgments of God and the proofs of his goodness. Those vows they were now ready to carry out in expressions of praise.

2. *O thou that hearest prayer.* Who hast revealed thyself as a God hearing prayer,—one of the leading characteristics of whose nature it is that thou *dost* hear prayer. Literally, "Hearer of prayer, to thee shall all flesh come." Nothing as applied even to God is

unto thee shall all flesh come.
3 [1] Iniquities prevail against me: *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt [n] purge them away.

[1] *Words*, or, *matters of iniquities.*

[n] 1 John i. 7, 9.

more sublime and beautiful than the appellative "Hearer of prayer." Nothing in his attributes is of more interest and importance to man. Nothing more indicates his condescension and goodness; nothing so much encourages us in the endeavour to overcome our sins, to do good, to save our souls, and to save the souls of others. Dark and dismal would this world be, if God did *not* hear prayer; gloomy, inexpressibly gloomy, would be the prospects of man, if he had not the assurance that God is a prayer-hearing God,—if he might not come to God at all times with the assurance that it is his *very nature* to hear prayer, and that his ear is ever open to the cries of the guilty, the suffering, the sad, the troubled, the dying. ¶ *Unto thee shall all flesh come.* That is, *all men*—for the word is here used evidently to denote mankind. The idea is, that there is no other resource for man, no other help, no other refuge, but the God that hears prayer. No other being can meet his actual wants; and those wants are to be met only in connexion with prayer. All men are *permitted* to come thus to God; all have *need* of his favour; all must perish unless, in answer to prayer, he interposes and saves the soul. It is also true that the period will arrive on earth when all flesh—all men—*will* come to God and worship him; when, instead of the scattered few who now approach him, all nations, all the dwellers on continents and islands, will worship him; will look to him in trouble; will acknowledge him as God; will supplicate his favour.

3. *Iniquities prevail against me.* Marg., as in Heb., *Words*, or *matters of iniquities.* The literal meaning is *words;* and the idea may be that *words* spoken in iniquity, or slanderous words spoken by others, prevailed against him. The phrase, however, is susceptible of the interpretation which refers it to iniquity itself;—meaning the *matter* of iniquity—the thing—iniquity itself—as if that overcame him, or got the mastery of him. The psalmist here, in his own name, seems to represent the *people* who thus approached God, for the psalm refers to the worship of an assembly or a congregation. The idea is, that when they thus came before God; when they had prepared all things for his praise (ver. 1); when they approached him in an attitude of prayer, they were so bowed down under a load of transgression — a weight of sin—as to hinder their easy access to his throne. They were so conscious of unworthiness; their sin had such an effect on their minds; it rendered them so dull, cold, and stupid, that they could not find access to the throne of God. How often do the people of God find this to be the case! ¶ As for *our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* That is, In reference to these very transgressions or iniquities that now press us down, thou wilt remove them. The language expresses the rising confidence and hope of the worshippers that God would not allow those transgressions so to prevail as to prevent their worshipping God acceptably. Heavy as was the burden of sin, and much as the consciousness of guilt tended to impede their worship, yet they felt assured that God would so remove their transgressions that they might have access to his mercy-seat. The word rendered *purge away* —כִּפַּר, *kaphar*—is the word which is commonly rendered *to atone for*, or which is used to represent the idea of *atonement.* See Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. The word has here the sense of *cleansing* or *purifying*, but it always carries with it, in the Scriptures, a reference to that through which the heart is cleansed—the atonement, or

4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we [o] shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.

[o] Ps. lxiii. 5.

the expiatory offering made for sin. The language here expresses the feeling which all *may* have, and *should* have, and which very many *do* have, when they approach God, that, although they are deeply conscious of sin, God *will* so graciously remove the guilt of sin, and lift off the burden, cleansing the soul by his grace, as to make it *not improper* that we should approach him, and that he will enable us to do it with peace, and joy, and hope. Comp. Notes on Ps. li. 2.

4. *Blessed* is the man whom *thou choosest.* That is, Happy is the man; or, "*Oh, the happiness of the man* whom thou dost thus permit to approach thee." The construction here in the Hebrew is the same as in Ps. i. 1. See Notes on that passage. The word *choosest* refers to the fact that true piety regards all such blessings as the result of the Divine favour; the fruit of his electing grace and love. Comp. Notes on Eph. i. 3, 4; 1 Pet. i. 2, 3. We approach God with confidence, with the spirit of true worshippers, with the spirit of his children, *only* as he inclines us to him, and calls us to partake of his favour. Comp. John vi. 44. ¶ *And causest to approach* unto thee. That is, that he may worship thee. The idea is here recognised in the word *causest,* that it is only by a Divine influence that men are led to worship God. The *cause*—the efficient reason—why any man worships his Maker at all, is to be found in God himself. This idea is fairly implied in the form of the word as it is used in the Hebrew. ¶ That *he may dwell in thy courts.* That is, either temporarily for the purpose of worship; or permanently, that he may serve thee in the sanctuary. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4. Comp. Ps. xv. 1. The word *courts* refers properly to the *area* around the tabernacle or the temple, and not to the tabernacle or temple itself. The worship of the people was offered in those courts, and not *in* the tabernacle or temple. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 12. ¶ *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house.* Our souls will find thus what they need; what they long for. See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 8. It is the nature of religion to *satisfy* the mind; that is, the soul finds in religion what meets its wants, for religion leaves no necessity of its nature unsupplied. It may be added that nothing else will do this *but* religion.—The word *house* here denotes a place where God *dwells,* and it might be applied to the temple, as it often is in the Scriptures (comp. Isa. ii. 3; lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46; John ii. 16; *et al.*); or to the tabernacle, before the temple was reared. Ps. xlii. 4; Matt. xii. 4; Judges xviii. 31; xx. 18, 26, 31. The reference here is to the tabernacle or tent which David reared on Mount Zion, and where the worship of God was celebrated before the temple was built. ¶ Even *of thy holy temple.* The word *temple* is most commonly applied in the Scriptures to the structure which Solomon built for the worship of God; and it is on the ground that the word is usually so applied, that De Wette and others have argued that this psalm could not have been written by David, but that it was composed after the temple was reared. But the word rendered *temple*—הֵיכָל, *haichal*—is a word of so general a character that it may be applied to *any* house erected for the worship of God. It is not unfrequently applied to the tabernacle. See Notes on Ps. v. 7. This psalm, therefore, may have been composed while the tabernacle was standing, and before the temple was built, and hence may have been composed by David, as the title intimates.

5 *By* terrible [p] things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *who art* the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the sea:

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; *being* girded with power:

7 Which [q] stilleth the noise of

[p] Ps. xlv. 4.

[q] Matt. viii. 26.

5. By *terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us.* That is, By things fitted to inspire us and all men with *awe,* or with a deep sense of thy majesty, thy power, and thy glory. The answer to their prayers would be in such a manner as deeply to impress their minds and hearts. God's judgments on his foes, and the manner of his manifesting his favour to his people, would be such as to impress the mind with a deep sense of his own greatness. Yet all this would be *in righteousness;* in the infliction of a just sentence on the wicked; in direct interposition in favour of the righteous. The judgments of God on guilty men have been always such as to keep the world in awe; such as were adapted deeply to impress mankind with a sense of his own majesty and glory. ¶ *O God of our salvation.* The God on whom our salvation, or our safety depends. ¶ Who art *the confidence of all the ends of the earth.* Of all parts of the earth, the word *ends* being used on the supposition that the earth is a *plain* having appropriate limits. This allusion is often found in the Scriptures, the sacred writers speaking, as all men do, as things *appear* to be. Thus all philosophers, as well as other men, speak of the sun as *rising* and *setting,* which is, in itself, no more strictly accurate than it is to speak of the earth as if it had limits or boundaries. The word *confidence* as used here means that God is the source of trust, or, that all proper reliance, by all men, in all parts of the earth and on the sea, must be in him; that is, that there is no other on whom men *can* properly rely. It does not mean that all men actually *repose* such confidence in him, which would not be true,—but that he is the only true source of confidence. ¶ *And of them that are afar off* upon *the sea.* That is, of all men on sea and land. The seaman has no other source of security amidst the dangers of the deep than God. Comp. Ps. cvii. 23–30. The language does not mean that all mariners actually *do* put their trust in God, but that they cannot confide in the winds and the waves,—in the strength of their vessel, — or their own power or skill in managing it,—but that the true and only ground of trust is God.

6. *Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains.* Fixing them firm on their foundations. This is an exhibition of vast *strength* or *power* on the part of God, as if he fixed them so firm that they could not be moved,—as if he handled with ease those vast masses of matter, with all their rocks and forests, — and caused them to repose steadily and calmly on their foundations. We have few more exalted conceptions of the power of God than to suppose him lifting with ease a vast mountain; letting it down where he pleases, and settling it so firmly that it cannot be moved. ¶ Being *girded with power.* That is, they seemed to be surrounded or encompassed with *power,* as a man girds himself up when he wishes to put forth a great effort of strength.

7. *Which stilleth the noise of the seas.* He calms the seas when they have been agitated by the storm. He causes the mighty waves to settle down, and the whole surface of the ocean becomes calm and smooth. The storm subsides at his command, and the sea is still. It was the manifestation of this power which demonstrated so clearly the divinity of the Lord Jesus, when he said to the troubled waves, "Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and

the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to [1] rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and [2] waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God,

[1] Or, *sing.*

[2] Or, *after thou hadst made it to desire* rain.

there was a great calm." Mark iv. 39. Comp. Ps. cvii. 29. ¶ *The noise of their waves.* The loud roar of the waters, so that they are still. ¶ *And the tumult of the people.* The raging; the fury; the excitement of assembled multitudes, resembling the raging waves of the ocean. This comparison is very common. See Isa. xvii. 12, 13. Comp. Notes on Rev. xix. 6. This is perhaps a more striking and wonderful exhibition of the power of God than that of calming down the waves of the ocean. In the one case, it is the exertion of mere power on nature, acting through its established laws, and where there is no resistance of *will;* in the other, it is power exerted over the will; power over agents conscious that they are free, and where the worst passions meet and mingle and rage.

8. *They also that dwell in the uttermost parts.* That is, Those who dwell in the remotest regions; far from civilised lands; far from those places where men are instructed as to the causes of the events which occur, and as to the being and character of the great God who performs these wonders. The idea is, that even they see enough of the evidences of the Divine presence and power to fill their minds with awe. In other words, there are in all lands evidences of the Divine existence and might. There is enough to fill the minds of men with awe, and to make them solemn. ¶ *Are afraid.* Thus the thunder, the storm, the tempest, the earthquake, the eclipse of the sun or the moon, fill the minds of barbarous nations with terror. ¶ *At thy tokens.* Or *signs.* That is, the signs which really indicate the existence, the presence, and the power of God. ¶ *Thou makest the outgoings.* The word rendered *outgoings* means properly *a going forth,* as of the rising of the sun (Ps. xix. 7); and then, *a place of going forth,* or from which anything goes forth, as a gate or door (Ezek. xlii. 11), or fountains from which water issues (Isa. xli. 18); and hence, the east, where the sun seems to come forth from his hiding-place. The representation here is that the morning *seems* to come forth, or that the rays of light stream out from the east; and, in like manner, that the fading light of the evening—the twilight—*seems* to come from the west. ¶ *Of the morning and evening to rejoice.* The allusion is to the east and the west. The sun in his rising and his setting *seems* to rejoice; that is, he appears happy, bright, cheerful. The margin is *to sing*—a poetic expression indicating exultation and joy.

9. *Thou visitest the earth.* God seems to come down that he may attend to the wants of the earth; survey the condition of things; arrange for the welfare of the world which he has made; and supply the wants of those whom he has created to dwell upon it. See Notes on Ps. viii. 4. ¶ *And waterest it.* Marg., *After thou hadst made it to desire* rain. This difference between the translations in the text and in the margin can be accounted for by the various meanings of the original word. The Hebrew term—שׁוּק, *shuk*—means properly (*a*) to run; (*b*) to run after anything, to desire, to look for; (*c*) *to run over,* to overflow; and then, (*d*) to cause to overflow. The meaning here evidently is, *he drenched the earth,* or caused the water to run abundantly. The reference is to a copious rain after a drought. ¶ *Thou greatly enrichest it.* That is, Thou givest to it *abundance;* thou pourest

which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou [1] settlest the furrows thereof; thou [2] makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year [3] with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

[1] Or, *causest* rain *to descend* into.

[2] *dissolvest it.* [3] *of.*

water upon it in such quantities, and in such a manner, as to make it *rich* in its productions. ¶ *With the river of God.* A river so abundant and full that it seems to come from God; it is such as we should expect to flow from a Being infinite in resources and in benevolence. Anything *great* is in the Scriptures often described as belonging to God, or his name is added to it to denote its greatness. Thus, *hills of God* mean lofty hills; *cedars of God,* lofty cedars, etc. ¶ Which *is full of water.* The waters are so abundant that it seems as if they *must* come from God. ¶ *Thou preparest them corn.* Grain. Thou givest to those who cultivate the earth an abundant harvest. ¶ *When thou hast so provided for it.* Or rather, When thou hast thus prepared the earth, to wit, by sending down abundant rains upon it. God prepares the earth to bear an abundant harvest, and then *he* gives that harvest. The *preparation* of the earth *for* the harvest, and then the *giving of* the harvest, are alike from him. The harvest could not be without the previous rain, and neither the rain nor the harvest could be without God. He does not create a harvest by miracle, but follows the order which he has himself ordained, and has respect to his own laws.

10. *Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly.* Or rather, its *furrows;* for so the Hebrew word properly means. Job xxxi. 38; xxxix. 10. The allusion is to the furrows made by the plough, which are filled with water by the rains. ¶ *Thou settlest the furrows thereof.* Or rather, *thou beatest down the ridges thereof.* Literally, *thou makest them to descend.* That is, The rain—falling on them—beats them down, so that the ground becomes level. ¶ *Thou makest it soft with showers.* Marg., *thou dissolvest it.* The idea is, to soften, to loosen, to make the soil light and open. All farmers know that this is necessary, and that it cannot be done without water. ¶ *Thou blessest the springing thereof.* Or, what springs from it; the vegetation. Thou dost bless it by causing it to grow luxuriantly, thus producing an abundant harvest.

11. *Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.* Marg., *the year of thy goodness.* The Hebrew is literally *the year of thy goodness,*—meaning a year remarkable for the manifestation of kindness; or a year of abundant productions. But the Hebrew will admit of the other construction, meaning that God crowns or adorns the year, as it revolves, with his goodness; or that the harvests, the fruits, the flowers of the year are, as it were, a crown set on the head of the year. The Septuagint renders it, "Thou wilt bless the crown of the year of thy goodness." De Wette renders it, "Thou crownest the year with thy blessing." Luther, "Thou crownest the year with good." On the whole, the most probable meaning is that expressed in our common version, referring to the beauty and the abundant productions of the year as if they were a crown on its head. The seasons are often personified, and the year is here represented as a beautiful female, perhaps, walking forward with a diadem on her brow. ¶ *And thy paths drop fatness.* That is, *fertility;* or, Fertility attends thy goings. The word rendered "drop," means properly *to distil;* to let fall gently, as the rain or the dew falls to the earth; and the idea is, that whereever God goes, marching through the

12 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills [1] rejoice on every side.

[1] *are girded with joy.*

13 The pastures are clothed

earth, fertility, beauty, abundance seems to distil or to fall gently along his path. God, in the advancing seasons, passes along through the earth, and rich abundance springs up wherever he goes.

12. *They drop* upon *the pastures of the wilderness.* The waste places, or the waste parts of the land; the uncultivated places, the places of rocks and sands. The word *wilderness* in the Scriptures does not mean, as with us, a tract of country covered with *trees*, but a place of barren rocks or sands—an uncultivated or thinly inhabited region. See Notes on Matt. iii. 1; Isa. xxxv. 1. *In* those wastes, however, there would be valleys, or places watered by springs and streams that would afford pastures for flocks and herds. Such are the "pastures of the wilderness" referred to here. God's passing along those valleys would seem to "drop," or distil, fertility and beauty, causing grass and flowers to spring up in abundance, and clothing them with luxuriance. ¶ *And the little hills rejoice on every side.* Marg., as in Heb., *are girded with joy.* That is, Joyful, happy scenes surround them; or, they seem to be full of joy and happiness. The valleys and the hills alike seem to be made glad. The following remarks of Professor Hackett ("Illustrations of Scripture," p. 30), will explain this passage. "Another peculiarity of the desert is that, though the soil is sandy, it rarely consists, for successive days together, of mere sand; it is interspersed, at frequent intervals, with clumps of coarse grass and low shrubs, affording very good pasturage, not only for camels, the proper tenants of the desert, but for sheep and goats. The people of the villages on the borders of the desert are accustomed to lead forth their flocks to the pastures found there. We frequently passed on our way shepherds so employed; and it was interesting to observe as a verification of what is implied in the Saviour's statement (Matt. xxv. 33), that the sheep and goats were not kept distinct, but intermixed with one another. The shepherds not only frequent the parts of the desert near their places of abode, but go often to a considerable distance from them; they remain absent for weeks and months, only changing their station from time to time, as their wants in respect to water and herbage may require. The incident related of Moses shows that the pastoral habits of the people were the same in his day: 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock *to the further part of the desert*, even to Horeb,' Exod. iii. 1. It is of the desert in this sense, as supplying to some extent the means of pasturage, that the prophet Joel speaks in i. 19, and ii. 22. The psalmist also says (lxv. 12, 13), with the same reference:

'Thou crownest the year with thy goodness,
And thy paths drop fatness;
They drop fatness on the pastures of the wilderness.'"

13. *The pastures are clothed with flocks.* The flocks stand so thick together, and are spread so far, that they seem to be a clothing for the pasture; or, the fields are entirely covered with them. ¶ *The valleys also are covered over with corn.* With grain. That is, the parts of the land—the fertile valleys—which are devoted to tillage. They are covered over, or clothed with waving grain, as the pasture-fields are with flocks. ¶ *They shout for joy, they also sing.* They seem to be full of joy and happiness. What a beautiful image is this! How well does it express the loveliness of nature; how appropriately does it describe the goodness of God! Everything seems to be happy; to be full of song; and all this is to be traced to the goodness

with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn: they [r] shout for joy, they also sing.

[r] Isa. lv. 12.

of God, as it all serves to express that goodness. Strange that there should be an atheist in such a world as this; —strange that there should be an unhappy man;—strange that amidst such beauties, while all nature joins in rejoicing and praise — pastures, cultivated fields, valleys, hills—there can be found a human being who, instead of uniting in the language of joy, makes himself miserable by attempting to cherish the feeling that God is *not* good!

PSALM LXVI.

The name of the author of this psalm is unknown. There is no certain evidence that it was composed by David, yet there is nothing in the psalm itself which is inconsistent with the supposition that he was the author. Perhaps the most natural and obvious interpretation of vers. 13-15, would be that there is reference there to the temple; and if so, of course, the psalm must have been written by some one else. But it is not absolutely necessary to suppose that the temple is there referred to, for the language *might* be applied to the tabernacle as the "house" or the place of the worship of God. There is, however, no positive evidence that it was composed by David, and it is impossible now to determine its authorship.

As little can the occasion on which the psalm was composed be determined. It is evident only that it was after there had been some calamity of a private nature, or after the nation had been subjected to oppression by some powerful enemies, and when there had been deliverance from that calamity, vers. 11, 12. The calamity was *similar* to those which had been endured by the nation in the time of the Egyptian oppressions, and naturally brought to mind the sufferings endured by the people of God at that time, while their own deliverance suggested a recollection of the deliverance of their fathers from that bondage, ver. 6. On the whole, the supposition of Rosenmüller that it was composed after the Babylonish captivity, and in view of the return of the people to their native land,—perhaps to be sung on their journey from the land of exile, seems to me to be the most probable of any. Venema supposes that it refers to the time of Hezekiah, and the overthrow of Sennacherib; others regard it as referring to the persecutions of David by Saul; others, to the rebellion of Absalom; others, to the famine which is mentioned in 2 Sam. xxi., or the pestilence, 2 Sam. xxiv. Paulus supposes that it had reference to the times of the Maccabees. The psalm relates to "vows" or promises which had been made in a time of trouble; and its composition and use are designed as the fulfilment of those vows, vers. 13-15. Such a psalm of praise would be a proper fulfilment of "vows" which it might be supposed the Hebrews *would* make in the time of their exile; to wit, that if they were ever permitted to return to their native land, they would go to the house of God, and sacrifice again on his altars.

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Introd. to Ps. iv. On the words, "A Song *or* Psalm," see Notes on the titles to Ps. xxx. and lxv.

The psalm contains,—

I. An exhortation, addressed to all the earth, to praise God, as a matter pertaining to all lands, vers. 1, 2.

II. A reference to the mighty acts of God, as a reason for worshipping him, vers. 3-7.

III. A reference to his gracious interposition in time of national danger and trouble, and to the fact that he had rescued the nation in a marvellous manner, vers. 8-12.

IV. A reference to the vows which had been made in that time of trouble, and the purpose now to execute those vows, by going to the house of God, and sacrificing on his altars, vers. 13-15.

V. A call on all people to hear what God had done for the worshippers: viz., That he had heard prayer; that he had interposed for their deliverance; that he had attended to the voice of supplication; that he had not turned away his mercy, vers. 16-20.

PSALM LXVI.

To the chief Musician. A Song *or* Psalm.

MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all [1] ye lands.

2 Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious.

[1] *the earth.*

3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies[2] submit themselves unto thee.

4 All the earth shall worship

[2] *lie,* or, *yield feigned obedience,* Ps. lxxxi. 15.

1. *Make a joyful noise unto God.* Literally, *Shout.* It is a call for exultation and praise. ¶ *All ye lands.* Marg., as in Heb., *all the earth.* The occasion was one that made universal exultation and praise proper. They who had been so deeply affected by the gracious interposition of God, could not but call on all the nations of the earth to unite with them in the expression of joy. The deliverance was so great that they wished all to rejoice with them (comp. Luke xv. 6, 9); and the intervention of God in the case of his people, furnished lessons about his character which gave occasion to all men to rejoice.

2. *Sing forth the honour of his name.* That is, Celebrate in appropriate praise the honour due to his name. Make that honour known in connexion with songs. ¶ *Make his praise glorious.* Literally, "Place honour, his praise;" that is, Give him honour; give him praise. The meaning is, Set forth his praise with songs —with music—with shouts;—*that* will be the appropriate expression of the praise which is due to him.

3. *Say unto God.* In your songs of praise. Let your songs be directly addressed to him, setting forth the grounds of that praise, or the reasons why it is due to him. ¶ *How terrible* art thou in *thy works*! How fearful! how much to be reverenced! The meaning is, that the manifestations of his power and greatness, in the events which occur under his government, are fitted to impress the mind with awe and reverence. ¶ *Through the greatness of thy power.* By the putting forth of thy power. Or, Thou hast such power over thine enemies as to be able to compel them to submit to thee. ¶ *Shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.* Margin, *Lie,* or *yield feigned obedience.* The Hebrew word means to lie, to speak lies; then, to feign, to flatter, to play the hypocrite. It is thus applied to the vanquished, who make a hollow profession of submission and love to their victors. See the word explained in the Notes on Ps. xviii. 44; comp. Ps. lxxxi. 15; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Job xxxi. 28. The meaning here is, that he had power to subdue them, and to compel them to acknowledge his right to reign. It is the putting forth of mere *power* which is here referred to; and all that such *power* can do, is to secure outward and feigned submission. It cannot of itself secure the submission of the heart, the will, and the affections. That is to be secured by *love,* not by *power;* and the difference between the submission of the true people of God and that of all others is that the former are subdued by *love,* the latter by *power;* the submission of the former is genuine, that of the latter is forced. The inhabitants of heaven will be submissive to God because they love him; the dwellers in hell will be restrained by power, because they cannot deliver themselves. So now, the submission of a true child of God is that of love, or is a willing submission; the submission of a hypocrite is that of fear, when he feigns obedience because he cannot help it, or because he simply dreads the wrath of God. The *object* here is to celebrate the *power* of God, and it was sufficient, in order to set that forth, to say that it *awed,* and *outwardly subdued* the enemies of God.

4. *All the earth shall worship thee.* That is, all the inhabitants of the world will bow down before thee, or

thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name. Selah.

5 Come and see the works of God: *he is* terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.

6 He [s] turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

8 O bless our God, ye people,

[s] Ex. xiv. 21.

render thee homage. The time will come when thy right to reign will be universally acknowledged, or when thou wilt everywhere be adored as the true God. This is in accordance with all the statements in the Bible. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 27; Comp. Notes on Isa. xlv. 23; Rom. xiv. 11. ¶ *And shall sing unto thee.* Shall celebrate thy praises. ¶ To *thy name.* To thee.

5. *Come and see the works of God.* See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 8, where substantially the same expression occurs. The idea is, "Come and see what God has done and is doing; come and learn from this what he is; and let your hearts in view of all this, be excited to gratitude and praise." The *particular* reference here is to what God had done in delivering his people from their former bondage in Egypt (ver. 6); but there is, connected with this, the idea that he actually rules among the nations, and that in his providence he has shown his power to govern and subdue them. ¶ He is *terrible* in his *doing*, etc. That is, His acts are fitted to inspire awe and veneration. See Notes on ver. 3.

6. *He turned the sea into dry* land. The Red Sea, when he brought his people out of Egypt, Exod. xiv. 21. This was an illustration of his power, and of his ability to defend and deliver his people. The *terror* in that case, or that which was "*terrible*," was the overthrow of their enemies—the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea—thus showing that he had power to destroy all the enemies of his people. ¶ *They went through the flood on foot.* Literally, *through the river.* It is probable that the reference here is to the passage of the river Jordan, when the Israelites were about to pass into the promised land (Joshua iii. 14–17);—thus combining the two great acts of Divine interposition in favour of his people, and showing his power over streams and floods. ¶ *There did we rejoice in him.* We, as a nation—our fathers—thus rejoiced in God. See Exod. xv.

7. *He ruleth by his power for ever.* Literally, "Ruling by his power for ever." The idea is, that he does this constantly; in each age and generation. He never has ceased to rule; he never will. His dominion extends from age to age, and will stretch forward for ever. The power which he evinced in delivering his people he retains now, and will retain for ever. In that unchanging power, his people may confide; that unchanging power, the wicked should fear. ¶ *His eyes behold the nations.* All nations; all people. He sees all their conduct. They can conceal nothing from him. They should, therefore, stand in awe. The wicked have much to fear from One who *sees* all that they do, and who has *power* to crush and destroy them. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 4. ¶ *Let not the rebellious exalt themselves.* Be lifted up with pride, or feel secure. They cannot overcome an Almighty God; they cannot escape from his power. The word *rebellious* here has reference to those who are impatient under the restraints of the law of God, and who are disposed to cast off his authority. The admonition is one that may be addressed to all who thus rebel against God, whether they are nations or individuals. Alike they must feel the vengeance of his arm, and fall beneath his power.

8. *O bless our God, ye people.* That is, particularly the people of the

and make the voice of his praise to be heard.

9 Which [1] holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver [t] is tried.

11 Thou broughtest us into the [u] net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.

12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through

[1] *putteth.* [t] Isa. xlviii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 7. [u] Hos. vii. 12.

nation; the Hebrew people. The call here to praise or bless God is on account of some special benefit which had been conferred on them, and which is referred to more particularly in the following verses. It was his gracious interposition in the time of danger, by which they were delivered from their foes, vers. 11, 12. ¶ *And make the voice of his praise to be heard.* Let it be sounded out afar, that it may be heard abroad.

9. *Which holdeth our soul in life.* Marg., as in Heb., *putteth.* That is, He has put (or placed) us in a state of safety. The word rendered "in life" means literally *among the living.* The word *soul* here is equivalent to *us,—ourselves;* and the idea is, that he keeps *us among the living.* What is here said of this special deliverance is true of all men at all times, that they owe the fact that they are among the living to the care of God; or, it is because he *puts* them among the living, or *keeps* them alive. ¶ *And suffereth not our feet to be moved.* That is, from their firm position of safety. The idea is taken from one who is walking, and who is kept from slipping or falling.

10. *For thou, O God, hast proved us.* That is, Thou hast tried us; thou hast tested the reality of our attachment to thee, as silver is tried by the application of fire. God had proved or tried them by bringing calamity upon them to test the reality of their allegiance to him. The nature of the *proof* or *trial* is referred to in the following verses. ¶ *Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.* That is, by being subjected to appropriate tests to ascertain its real nature, and to remove from it imperfections. Comp. Notes on 1 Pet. i. 7; Isa. i. 25; xlviii. 10; see also Zech. xiii. 9; Mal. iii. 3.

11. *Thou broughtest us into the net.* That is, Thou hast suffered or permitted us to be brought into the net; thou hast suffered us to be taken captive, as beasts are caught in a snare. See Notes on Ps. ix. 15. The allusion here is to the efforts made by their enemies to take them, as hunters lay gins, or spread nets, to capture wild beasts. The idea here is, that those enemies had been successful; God had suffered them to fall into their hands. If we suppose this psalm to have been composed on the return from the Babylonish captivity, the propriety of this language will be apparent, for it well describes the fact that the nation had been subdued by the Babylonians, and had been led captive into a distant land. Comp. Lam. i. 13. ¶ *Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.* The loins are mentioned as the seat of strength (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 11; 1 Kings xii. 10; Job xl. 16); and the idea here is, that he *had put their strength to the test;* he had tried them to see how much they could bear; he had made the test effectual by applying it to the part which was able to bear most. The idea is, that he had called them to endure as much as they were able to endure. He had tried them to the utmost.

12. *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads.* This refers evidently to some national subjection or conquest—most probably to their having been subdued by the Babylonians. Professor Alexander renders this, "Thou hast caused men to ride *at* our head," as if leading them forth as captives in war. The most probable meaning, however, is that they had

fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a [1] wealthy *place*.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows,

14 Which my lips have [2] uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

[1] *moist.*

[2] *opened.*

been subdued, as if on a field of battle, and as if their conquerors had ridden over them when prostrate on the ground. Comp. Notes on Ps. xliv. 5, and Isa. li. 23. ¶ *We went through fire and through water.* This is designed to represent the nature of their trials. It was *as if* they had been made to pass through burning flames and raging floods. Comp. Notes on Isa. xliii. 2. Instead of passing through the seas and rivers when the waters had been turned back, and when a dry and safe path was made for them, as was the case with their fathers (ver. 6), they had been compelled to breast the flood itself; and yet, notwithstanding this, God had brought them into a place of safety. In either way, by *parting* the floods, or by conducting his people *through* them, as shall seem best pleasing to him, God can conduct his people safely, and deliver them from danger. The power, the protecting care, the love, and the faithfulness of God are shown with equal clearness *whether* he divides the flood and causes his people to march through as on dry land, or *whether* he suffers the flood to rage and heave around them while he conducts his chosen people safely through. ¶ *But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy* place. Marg., *moist.* Professor Alexander, *overflow, abundance.* Vulgate, *into a place of refreshment* — refrigerium. The LXX., εἰς ἀναψυχήν. Luther, *Thou hast led us forth and quickened us.* De Wette, *zum Ueberflusse—to overflowing*, or *abundance.* The Hebrew word—רְוָיָה, *revayah*—means properly *abundant drink, abundance.* It occurs only here and in Ps. xxiii. 5, where it is rendered *runneth over.* See Notes on that place. The proper idea here is, that he had brought them into a land where there was plenty of water—as emblematic of abundance in general. He had led them to a place where there were ample rivers, springs, and streams, producing fertility and abundance. This would be the language of the people *after* their return from exile, and when they were permitted again to re-visit their native land—a land always characterized as a land of plenty. See Deut. viii. 7; comp. Exod. iii. 8; Lev. xx. 24; Num. xiii. 27.

13. *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings.* To thy temple—the place of worship. This is language designed to represent the feelings and the purpose of the *people.* If the psalm was composed on occasion of the return from the Babylonish captivity, it means that, as their first act, the people would go to the house of God, and acknowledge his goodness to them, and render him praise. On the word *burnt-offerings*, see Notes on Isa. i. 11. ¶ *I will pay thee my vows.* I will keep the solemn promises which I had made; that is, the promises which the people had made in the long period of their captivity. On the word *vows*, see Notes on Ps. xxii. 25.

14. *Which my lips have uttered*, etc. Marg., *opened.* The Hebrew word, however,—פָּצָה, *patzah*—means properly to tear apart; to rend; and then, to open wide, as the mouth, for example,—or the throat,—as wild beasts do, Ps. xxii. 13. Then it means to open the mouth in scorn (Lam. ii. 16; iii. 46); and then, to utter hasty words, Job xxxv. 16. The idea would be expressed by us by the phrases *to bolt* or *blurt out;* to utter hastily; or, to utter from a heart full and overflowing; to utter with very

15 I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of [1] fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

16 Come [v] *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

[1] *marrow.* [v] Ps. xxxiv. 2.

little care as to the language employed. It is the fulness of the *heart* which would be suggested by the word, and not a nice choice of expressions. The *idea* is, that the heart was *full;* and that the vows were made under the influence of deep emotion, when the heart was so full that it could not *but* speak, and when there was very little attention to the language. It was not a calm and studied selection of words. Such vows are not less acceptable to God than those which are made in the best-selected language. Not a little of the most popular sacred poetry in all tongues is of this nature; and when refined down to the nicest rules of art it ceases to be popular, or to meet the wants of the soul, and is laid aside. The psalmist here means to say, that though these vows were the result of deep feeling—of warm, gushing emotion—rather than of calm and thoughtful reflection, yet there was no disposition to *disown* or *repudiate* them now. They were made in the depth of feeling—in real sincerity—and there was a purpose fairly to carry them out. ¶ *When I was in trouble.* When the people were in captivity, languishing in a foreign land. Vows made in trouble—in sickness, in bereavement, in times of public calamity—should be faithfully performed when health and prosperity visit us again; but, alas, how often are they forgotten!

15. *I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings.* Marg., *marrow.* On the word rendered *burnt-offerings* see Notes on Isa. i. 11. The word rendered *fatlings* is rendered in Isa. v. 17, *lambs.* It may be applied to any animal considered as *fat*—a qualification required in sacrifices to be made on the altar, Isa. i. 11. ¶ *With the incense of rams.* The word here rendered *incense* is commonly applied to aromatics which were burned in the tabernacle or temple, producing a grateful odour (see Notes on Isa. i. 13); but it seems here to be used with reference to the smoke ascending from burning rams offered in sacrifice—ascending as the smoke of incense did. The smoke thus ascending would be as grateful and acceptable as incense. ¶ *I will offer bullocks with goats.* Bullocks *and* goats. That is, I will present sacrifices in *all* the forms *required* in worship; in all the forms that will express gratitude to God, or that will be an acknowledgment of dependence and guilt; in all that would properly express homage to the Deity. Bullocks and goats were both required in the ancient worship.

16. *Come* and *hear, all ye that fear God.* All who are true worshippers of God,—the idea of *fear* or *reverence* being put for worship in general. The call is on all who truly loved God to hear what he had done, in order that he might be suitably honoured, and that due praise might be given him. ¶ *And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* This is probably the personification of an individual to represent the people, considered as delivered from oppression and bondage. The words "*for my soul*" are equivalent to *for me.* Literally, *for my life.* The phrase would embrace *all* that God had done by his gracious intervention in delivering the people from bondage. The *language* here is such as may be used by any one who is converted to God, in reference (*a*) to all that God has done to redeem the soul; (*b*) to all that he has done to pardon its guilt; (*c*) to all that he has done to give it peace and joy; (*d*) to all that he has done to enable it to overcome sin; (*e*) to all that he has done to give it comfort in the prospect of death; (*f*) to all that he has done to impart the hope of heaven.

17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

18 If *w* I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*;

w Prov. xxviii. 9.

The *principle* here is one which it is right to apply to all such cases. It is right and proper for a converted sinner to call on others to hear what God has done for him; (*a*) because it is due to God thus to honour him; (*b*) because the converted heart naturally gives utterance to expressions of gratitude and praise, or wishes to make known the joy derived from pardoned sin; (*c*) because there is in such a soul a strong desire that others may partake of the same blessedness, and find the same satisfaction and peace in the service of God. It is the *duty* of those who are pardoned and converted thus to call on others to hear what God has done for them;—(*a*) because others have the same *need* of religion which they have; (*b*) because the *same* salvation is provided for them which has been provided for those who have found peace; (*c*) because all are under obligation to make known as far as possible the fact that God *has* provided salvation for sinners, and that all *may* be saved. He who has no such sense of the mercy of God, manifested towards himself, as to desire that others may be saved,—who sees no such value in the religion which he professes as to have an earnest wish that others may partake of it also,—can have no real evidence that his own heart has ever been converted to God. Comp. Notes on Rom. ix. 1–3; x. 1.

17. *I cried unto him with my mouth.* That is, in my trouble; when distress came upon me. This, according to the explanation of the design of the psalm given above, is one individual speaking on behalf of the nation, or uttering the sentiment of the people. At the same time, however, all this is language appropriate to an individual when recording his own experience. ¶ *And he was extolled with my tongue.* I praised him; I acknowledged his supremacy. I recognised my dependence on him, and looked to him as that God who had all things under his control, and who could grant me the deliverance which I desired.

18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart.* Literally, "*If I have seen* iniquity in my heart." That is, If I have indulged in a purpose of iniquity; if I have had a wicked end in view; if I have not been willing to forsake all sin; if I have cherished a purpose of pollution or wrong. The meaning is not literally, If I have "*seen*" any iniquity in my heart—for no one can look into his own heart, and not see that it is defiled by sin; but, If I have *cherished* it in my soul; if I have gloated over past sins; if I am purposing to commit sin again; if I am not willing to abandon all sin, and to be holy. ¶ *The Lord will not hear* me. That is, He will not regard and answer my prayer. The idea is, that in order that prayer may be heard, there must be a purpose to forsake all forms of sin. This is a great and most important principle in regard to prayer. The same principle is affirmed or implied in Ps. xviii. 41; xxxiv. 15; Prov. i. 28; xv. 29; xxviii. 9; Isa. i. 15; Jer. xi. 11; xiv. 12; Zech. vii. 13; John ix. 31. It is also *especially* stated in Isa. lviii. 3–7. The principle is applicable (*a*) to secret *purposes* of sin; to sinful desires, corrupt passions, and evil propensities; (*b*) to *acts* of sin in individuals, as when a man is pursuing a business founded on fraud, dishonesty, oppression, and wrong; (*c*) to public acts of sin, as when a people fast and pray (Isa. lviii.), and yet hold their fellow-men in bondage; or enact and maintain unjust and unrighteous laws; or uphold the acts of wicked rulers; or countenance and support by law that which is contrary to the law of God; and (*d*) to the feelings of an awakened and trembling

19 *But* verily God hath heard *me*; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

sinner when he is professedly seeking salvation. If there is still the love of evil in his heart; if he has some cherished purpose of iniquity which he is not willing to abandon; if there is any *one* sin, however small or unimportant it may seem to be, which he is not willing to forsake, he cannot hope that God will hear his prayer; he may be assured that he will not. *All prayer, to be acceptable to God,* MUST *be connected with a purpose to forsake all sin.*

19. But *verily God hath heard* me, etc. That is, He has given me evidence that he has heard my prayer; and, in doing this, he has thus given me the assurance also that I do *not* regard iniquity in my heart. The evidence that he has heard me is at the same time proof to my mind that I do *not* love sin. As it is a settled and universal principle that God does *not* hear prayer when there is in the heart a cherished love and purpose of iniquity, so it follows that, if there is evidence that he *has* heard our prayers, it is proof that he has seen that our hearts are sincere, and that we truly desire to forsake all forms of sin.

20. *Blessed* be *God, which hath not turned away my prayer.* That is, It is fit that I should praise and adore God for the fact that he *has* graciously condescended to listen to the voice of my supplications. ¶ *Nor his mercy from me.* There is no more proper ground of praise than the fact that God hears prayer—the prayer of poor, ignorant, sinful, dying men. When we consider how great is his condescension in doing this;—when we think of his greatness and immensity;—when we reflect that the whole universe is dependent on him, and that the farthest worlds need his care and attention;—when we bear in mind that we are creatures of a day and "know nothing;"—and especially when we remember how we have violated his laws, how sensual, corrupt, and vile our lives have been, how low and grovelling have been our aims and purposes, how we have provoked him by our unbelief, our ingratitude, and our hardness of heart—we can never express, in appropriate words, the extent of his goodness in hearing our prayers, nor can we find language which will properly give utterance to the praises due to his name for having condescended to listen to our cries for mercy.

PSALM LXVII.

On the phrases in the title, "To the chief Musician" and "on Neginoth," see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv. On the words "psalm" and "song," see Notes on the title to Ps. xlviii.

Four of the psalms (iv., vi., liv., lv.), where the phrase "on Neginoth" occurs, are ascribed to David; one (Ps. lxxvii.) is ascribed to Asaph; but there is no intimation in the title of this psalm (or in the psalm itself), which would enable us to determine by whom it was composed. It cannot be demonstrated that it was *not* written by David, but there is no certain evidence that it *was*. Nor is it possible to ascertain the occasion on which it was composed. Venema supposes that it was written in the time of Hezekiah, after the land was delivered from the Assyrian invasion, and was at peace; and, especially, in reference to the prediction in Isa. xxxvii. 30, "Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year such as groweth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof." This was to be a "sign" to the people of Israel that the land would not be subjugated to the foreigners (see my Notes on that passage); and the psalm, according to this supposition, was written in view of the fact that God had, at the time of its composition, mercifully interposed in the destruction of the Assyrian army. The psalm contains, according to this idea, an expression of praise for the merciful interposition

PSALM LXVII.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth.
A Psalm *or* Song.

GOD *x* be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause *y* his face to shine [1] upon us; Selah.

2 That thy way may be known

x Num. vi. 25. *y* Ps. iv. 6. [1] *with.*

which God had thus vouchsafed, and a prayer that the promise might be *fully* accomplished; that the land might be free from any future invasion; and that, according to the prediction, it might produce abundantly, or that it might be cultivated in peace, and with no fear of foreign conquest. Thus, (ver. 6): "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." There is much plausibility in this supposition, though it is not possible with certainty to determine its correctness.

Thus understood, the psalm is designed to express the feelings—the desires—the hopes of the Hebrew people in those circumstances. It contains,

I. A prayer that God would still be merciful to them and bless them, as if there were still some danger to be apprehended, ver. 1.

II. A desire that his ways—the principles of his administration—might be made known to all people, ver. 2.

III. A call on the people to praise God for what he had done, with the expression of a wish that all nations might be glad and rejoice; that they might put their trust in God as a righteous God; that they might understand the great principles on which he governs the world, vers. 3-5.

IV. A statement of the fact that *then*—in connexion with this universal recognition of God—the prophecy would be fulfilled in its most complete sense; that the earth would yield her increase as it was made to do; that there would be universal prosperity: in other words, that the proper acknowledgment of God, and the prevalence of true religion, would be an incalculable benefit to man's temporal interests; or, that under such a state of things, the true fertility and productiveness of the earth would be developed, vers. 6, 7. The psalm thus illustrates *the influence of true religion in securing the proper cultivation of the earth (accomplishing so far the purpose for which man was made,* Gen. i. 28; ii. 15), *and consequently in promoting the happiness of mankind.*

1. *God be merciful unto us, and bless us.* There is, perhaps (as Prof. Alexander suggests), an allusion, in the language used here, to the sacerdotal benediction in Numb. vi. 24–26: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The prayer is that God would bestow upon his people the blessing implied in the form of benediction which he had directed the ministers of his religion to use. The first cry is, of course, for mercy or favour. The beginning of all blessings to mankind is the favour or mercy of God. There is no higher blessing than his *favour;* there is none that comes from him which should not be regarded as *mercy.* ¶ And *cause his face to shine upon us.* Marg., *With us.* That is, among us. It is an invocation of his presence and favour. On the phrase "cause his face to shine," see Notes on Ps. iv. 6.

2. *That thy way may be known upon earth.* The law of God; the principles and methods of the Divine administration; the way in which God rules mankind, and in which he bestows his blessings on men. The prayer is, that all the earth might be made acquainted with the methods in which God deals with his people, or confers favours on men. The happiness of man depends on a knowledge of the principles on which God bestows his favours; for all men are, in all things, dependent on him. The success of a farmer depends on his understanding, and complying with, the laws and principles on which God bestows a harvest; the preservation of health, the restoration of health when we are sick, depends on a knowledge of the great laws which God has ordained for the continuance of the healthy functions of our bodies,

upon earth, thy saving health among all [z] nations.

3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

4 O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and [1] govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

[z] Matt. xxviii. 19. [1] *lead.*

and on the use of the means which he has provided for restoring health when those functions are disordered; and, in like manner, the salvation of the soul depends on the right understanding of the method which God has appointed to secure his favour. In neither of these cases—in no case—is it the business of men to *originate* laws of their own;—laws for the cultivation of the earth, or for the preservation of health, or for the saving of the soul. The business of man is to *find out* the rules in accordance with which God bestows his favours, and then to act in obedience to them. The psalmist here supposes that there *are* certain rules or principles, in accordance with which God bestows blessings on mankind; and he prays that those rules and principles may be everywhere made known upon the earth. ¶ *Thy saving health among all nations.* The original word here rendered *saving health*, is *salvation.* It is with great uniformity so rendered. It is indeed translated *welfare*, in Job xxx. 15; *help*, in Ps. iii. 2; xlii. 5; *deliverance*, in Ps. xviii. 50; xliv. 4; Isa. xxvi. 18; *helping*, Ps. xxii. 1; and *health*, in Ps. xlii. 11; but elsewhere it is in all cases rendered *salvation.* The words *saving health* were adopted from an older version, but no argument should be founded on them. The word *salvation* expresses all that there is in the original; and the prayer is, that the method by which God confers salvation on men may be made known throughout all lands. Assuredly no more appropriate prayer could be offered than that all the race may be made acquainted with the way in which God saves sinners.

3. *Let the people praise thee, O God.* Do thou incline them to praise thee:—a prayer that all people might so understand the character and ways of God, and might have such a sense of his claims upon them, as to lead them to praise him. ¶ *Let all the people praise thee.* The people of all lands. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 27. Comp. Ps. lxvi. 4.

4. *O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy.* All the nations of the earth. Let them all be made acquainted with thee; with thy character; with the principles of thy government; with the methods by which thou dost bestow thy favours, that they all *may* be made glad. These things pertain to them all. The knowledge of these things would convey inestimable blessings to them all, and fill all their hearts with joy. Nothing would, in fact, diffuse so much happiness over a miserable and guilty world—nothing would furnish such an occasion for universal joy, gratitude, and praise—as the possession of the knowledge of the great principles on which God rules the world, and on which he blesses men. ¶ *For thou shalt judge the people righteously.* That is, The great principles of thy administration are *right*, or *righteous*, and the nations will have occasion to rejoice in them. ¶ *And govern the nations upon earth.* Marg., *lead.* So the Hebrew. That is, God would instruct them what to do; he would guide them in paths of prosperity, happiness, salvation. Individuals and nations, as they follow the counsels of God, are safe and happy; and in no other way.

5. *Let the people praise thee,* etc. See ver. 5. The repetition shows that this was the principal thought in the mind of the author of the psalm. It

6 *Then* [a] shall the earth yield her increase; *and* God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

a Lev. xxvi. 4; Ezek. xxxiv. 27. Hos. ii. 21, 22.

expresses an earnest—an intense—desire, that all nations should acknowledge God as the true God, and praise him for his mercies.

6. Then *shall the earth yield her increase.* The word rendered *increase*—יְבוּל, *yebul*—means properly *produce,* or that which the earth produces when properly cultivated. It is rendered *increase,* as here, in Lev. xxvi. 4, 20; Deut. xxxii. 22; Judges vi. 4; Job xx. 28; Ps. lxxviii. 46; lxxxv. 12; Ezek. xxxiv. 27; Zech. viii. 12; and *fruit,* in Deut. xi. 17; Hab. iii. 17; Hag. i. 10. It does not elsewhere occur. The Hebrew verb here is in the past tense—"*has yielded* her increase," but the connexion seems to demand that it shall be rendered in the future, as the entire psalm pertains to the future,—to the diffusion of the knowledge of the way of God, ver. 2; to the desire that the nations might praise him, vers. 3–5; and to the fact that God would bless the people, vers. 6, 7. Thus understood, the idea is, that the prevalence of true religion in the world would be connected with prosperity, or that it would tend greatly to increase the productions of the earth. This it would do, (*a*) as such an acknowledgment of God would tend to secure the Divine favour and blessing on those who cultivate the earth, preventing the necessity, by way of judgment, of cutting off its harvests by blight, and drought, and mildew, by frost, and storm, and destructive insects, caterpillars, and locusts; (*b*) as it would lead to a much more extensive and general cultivation of the soil, bringing into the field multitudes, as labourers, to occupy its waste places, who are now idle, or intemperate, or who are cut down by vice and consigned to an early grave. If all who are now idle were made industrious—as they would be by the influence of true religion; if all who by intemperance are rendered worthless, improvident, and wasteful, were made sober and working men; if all who are withdrawn from cultivating the earth by wars—who are kept in standing armies, consumers and not producers,—or who are cut down in battle, should be occupied in tilling the soil, or should become producers in any way; and if all who are now *slaves,* and whose labour is not worth half as much as that of freemen, should be restored to their equal rights,—the productions of the earth would at once be increased many times beyond the present amount. The prevalence of true religion in the world, arresting the cause of idleness and improvidence, and keeping alive those who are now cut off by vice, by crime, and by the ravages of war, would soon make the whole world assume a different aspect, and would accomplish the prediction of the prophet (Isa. xxxv. 1) that the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." The earth has never yet been half cultivated. Vast tracts of land are still wholly unsubdued and uninhabited. No part of the earth has yet been made to produce all that it could be made to yield; and no one can estimate *what* the teeming earth might be *made* to produce if it were brought under the influence of proper cultivation. As far as the true religion spreads, it *will* be cultivated; and in the days of the millenium, when the true religion shall be diffused over all continents and islands, the earth will be a vast fruitful field, and much of the beauty and the fertility of Eden be reproduced in every land. ¶ And *God,* even *our own God, shall bless us.* The true God; the God whom we adore. That is, He will bless us with this abundant fertility; he will bless us with every needed favour.

7 God shall bless us; and all
b Ps. xxii. 27.
b the ends of the earth shall fear him.

7. *God shall bless us.* That is, with prosperity, peace, salvation. The making of his name known abroad will be the means of blessing the world; will be the highest favour that can be conferred on mankind. ¶ *And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.* All parts of the earth. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 27. The time, therefore, looked for is that when the knowledge of the Lord shall pervade all lands;—the time to which the ancient prophets were constantly looking forward as the sum of all their wishes, and the burden of all their communications;—that time, for the coming of which all who love their fellow-men, and who earnestly desire the welfare of the world, should most earnestly pray. The hope that this may occur, is the only bright thing in the future respecting this world; and he lives most in accordance with the high ends for which man was made who most earnestly desires this, and who, by his prayers and efforts, contributes most to this glorious consummation.

PSALM LXVIII.

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David. It is dedicated to "the chief Musician." See Notes on the Introd. to Ps. iv. There is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title, as there is nothing *in* the psalm which conflicts with the supposition that David was the author, and as it accords so much, in its scope and language, with his undoubted compositions. On the phrase in the title "*A Psalm* or *Song*," see Notes on the title to Ps. lxv.

It is not certainly known on what occasion the song was composed. It is evidently, like the eighteenth psalm, a triumphal song designed to celebrate victories which had been achieved; but whether composed to celebrate some particular victory, or in view of all that had been done in subduing the enemies of the people of God, it is impossible now to determine. Prof. Alexander supposes that it was in reference to the victory recorded in 2 Sam. xii. 26-31, the last important victory of David's reign. Venema supposes that it was composed on the occasion of removing the ark to Mount Zion, to the place which David had prepared for it. This also is the opinion of Rosenmüller. De Wette inclines to the opinion that it was written in view of the victory over the Ammonites and others, as recorded in 2 Sam. viii.-xii. There are some things, however, in regard to the time and occasion on which the psalm was composed, which can be determined fro the psalm itself.

(1) It is clear that it was not composed *before* the time of David, because before his time Jerusalem or Zion was not the seat of the royal authority, nor the place of Divine worship, which it is evidently supposed to be in the psalm, ver. 29.

(2) It was composed when the Hebrew nation was one, or before the separation of the ten tribes and the formation of the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam; for Benjamin, Judah, *Zebulon* and *Naphtali* are especially mentioned as taking part in the solemnities referred to in the psalm, ver. 27.

(3) It was consequently before the Babylonish captivity.

(4) It was composed on some occasion of bringing up the ark, and putting it in the place which had been prepared for it, vers. 16, 24, 25. These verses can be best explained on the supposition that the psalm was written on that occasion. Indeed they cannot well be explained on any other supposition.

(5) It was in view of *past* triumphs; of victories secured in former times; of what God had then done for his people, and *especially* of what he had done when the ark of the covenant had been placed at the head of the armies of Israel, ver. 14. Comp. vers. 7, 8, 12, 17, 18.

(6) It was in anticipation of future triumphs--the triumphs of the true religion; under the feeling and belief that *Jerusalem* would be the centre from which wholesome influences would go out over the world; and that through the influences which would go out from Jerusalem *the world* would be subdued to God, vers 20-23; 29-31. Comp. Isa. ii. 3.

PSALM LXVIII.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm *or* Song of David.

LET [c] God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them

c Num. x. 35; Isa. xxxiii. 3.

also that hate him flee [1] before him.

2 As [d] smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away: as wax

[1] *from his face.* *d* Hos. xiii. 3.

The psalm was composed, therefore, I apprehend, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, and placed in the city of David, in the tent or tabernacle which he had erected for it there: 2 Sam. vi. 12; 1 Chron. xv. It is not improbable that other psalms, also, were composed for this occasion, as it was one of great solemnity.

The contents of the psalm accord entirely with this supposition. They are as follows:—

I. A prayer that God would arise and scatter all his enemies, vers. 1, 2.

II. A call on the people to praise God, with reference to his greatness, and to his paternal character, vers. 3-6.

III. A reference to what he had done in former times for his people in conducting them from bondage to the promised land, vers. 7-14.

IV. A particular reference to the ark, vers. 15-18. After it had been lying neglected, God had gone forth with it, and Zion had become distinguished above the hills; the chariots of God had been poured forth; victory had attended its movements; and God had gone up leading captivity captive.

V. The anticipation of future triumphs,—the confident expectation of future interposition,—as derived from the history of the past, vers. 19-23.

VI. A description of the procession on the removing of the ark, vers. 24-27.

VII. The anticipation of future triumphs expressed in another form, not that of subjugation by mere *power*, but of a *voluntary* submission of kings and nations to God, vers. 28-31. Kings would come with presents (ver. 29); nations—Egypt and Ethiopia—would stretch out their hands to God, ver. 31.

VIII. A call on all the nations, in view of these things, to ascribe praise to God, vers. 32-35.

1. *Let God arise.* See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. There is an obvious reference here to the words used by Moses on the removal of the ark in Num. x. 35. The same language was also employed by Solomon when the ark was removed to the temple, and deposited in the most holy place (2 Chron. vi. 41): "Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength." It would seem probable, therefore, that this psalm was composed on some such occasion. ¶ *Let his enemies be scattered.* So in Num. x. 35: "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The ark was the symbol of the Divine presence, and the idea is, that whereever that was, the enemies of God would be subdued, or that it was only by the power of Him who was supposed to reside there that his enemies could be overcome. ¶ *Let them also that hate him flee before him.* Almost the exact language used by Moses in Num. x. 35. It is *possible* that this may have been used on some occasion when the Hebrews were going out to war; but the more probable supposition is that it is general language designed to illustrate the power of God, or to state that his rising up, at any time, would be followed by the discomfiture of his enemies. The placing of the ark where it was designed to remain permanently would be a proper occasion for suggesting this general truth, that all the enemies of God must be scattered when he rose up in his majesty and power.

2. *As smoke is driven away.* To wit, by the wind. Smoke—vapour—easily disturbed and moved by the slightest breath of air—represents an object of no stability, or having no power of resistance, and would thus represent the real weakness of the most mighty armies of men as opposed to God. ¶ So *drive* them *away.* With the same ease with which smoke is driven by the slightest breeze, so

[e] melteth before the fire, *so* let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice [f] before God; yea, let them [1] exceedingly rejoice.

4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

[e] Micah i. 4. [f] 1 Thess. v. 16.

[1] *rejoice with gladness.*

do the enemies of God disappear before his power. Comp. Notes on Ps. i. 4. ¶ *As wax melteth before the fire.* Comp. Ps. xxii. 14. The meaning here is plain. As wax is melted down by fire—losing all its hardness, its firmness, its power of resistance, so must the most mighty armies melt away before God. ¶ So *let the wicked perish at the presence of God.* That is, those who rise up against him; his enemies. It will be as easy for God to destroy wicked men as it is for fire to melt down wax.

3. *But let the righteous be glad.* That is, Let them be prosperous and happy; let them be under thy protecting care, and partake of thy favour. While the wicked are driven away like smoke, let the righteous live, and flourish, and be safe. Comp. Ps. xxxii. 11. ¶ *Let them rejoice before God.* In the presence of God; or as admitted to his presence. The wicked will be driven far off; the righteous will be admitted to his presence, and will rejoice before him. ¶ *Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.* Marg., as in Heb., *rejoice with gladness.* The expression is designed to express great joy; joy that is multiplied and prolonged. It is joy of heart accompanied with all the outward expressions of joy.

4. *Sing unto God, sing praises to his name.* That is, *to him;* the name being often put for the person himself. The repetition denotes intensity of desire; a wish that God might be praised with the highest praises. ¶ *Extol him.* The word here rendered *extol*—סֹלּוּ, *salal*—means to lift up, to raise, to raise up, as into a heap or mound; and especially to cast up and prepare a way, or to make a way level before an army by casting up earth; that is, to prepare a way for an army. See Notes on Isa. xl. 3. Comp. also Isa. lvii. 14; lxii. 10; Job xix. 12; xxx. 12; Prov. xv. 19 (*marg.*); Jer. xviii. 15. This is evidently the idea here. It is not to "*extol*" God in the sense of praising him; it is to prepare the way before him, as of one marching at the head of his armies, or as a leader of his hosts. The allusion is to God as passing before his people in the march to the promised land; and the call is to make ready the way before him,—that is, to remove all obstructions out of his path, and to make the road smooth and level. ¶ *That rideth.* Rather, "that *marcheth.*" There is, indeed, the idea of *riding,* yet it is not that of "riding *upon the heavens,*" which is the meaning, but of riding at the head of his hosts on their march. ¶ *Upon the heavens.* The word here used—עֲרָבָה, *arabah*—never means either heaven, or the clouds. It properly denotes an arid tract, a sterile region, a desert; and then, a plain. It is rendered *desert* in Isa. xxxv. 1, 6; xl. 3; xli. 19; li. 3; Jer. ii. 6; xvii. 6; l. 12; Ezek. xlvii. 8; and should have been so rendered here. So it is translated by De Wette, Prof. Alexander, and others. The LXX. render it, "Make way for him who is riding westward." So the Latin Vulgate. The Chaldee renders it, "Extol him who is seated upon the throne of his glory in the north heaven." The reference, doubtless, is to the passage through the desert over which the Hebrews wandered for forty years. The Hebrew word which is employed here is still applied by the Arabs to that region. The idea is that of Jehovah marching over those deserts at the head of his armies, and the call is to

5 A father of the fatherless, [g] and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

[g] Jer. xlix. 11.

prepare a way for him on his march, comp. vers. 7, 8. ¶ *By his name JAH.* This refers to his riding or marching at the head of his forces through the desert, *in the character described by that name*—or, *as Jah;* that is, Jehovah. *Jah* is an abbreviation of the word *Jehovah,* which was assumed by God as his peculiar name, Ex. vi. 3. The word *Jehovah* is usually rendered, in our version, LORD, printed in small capitals to denote that the original is *Jehovah;* the word itself is retained, however, in Ex. vi. 3; Ps. lxxxiii. 18; Isa. xii. 2 (see Notes); and Isa. xxvi. 4. The word *Jah* occurs in this place only, in our translation. It is found in combination, or in certain formulas—as in the phrase *Hallelujah,* Ps. civ. 35; cv. 45; cvi. 1. The meaning here is, that God went thus before his people in the *character* of the true God, or *as* Jehovah. ¶ *And rejoice before him.* Or, in his presence. Let there be joy when he thus manifests himself as the true God. The presence of God is fitted to give joy to all the worlds that he has made, or wherever he manifests himself to his creatures.

5. *A father of the fatherless.* Or, of orphans. Comp. Ps. x. 14, 18. That is, God takes the place of the parent. See Jer. xlix. 11: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." This is one of the most tender appellations that could be given to God, and conveys one of the most striking descriptions that can be given of his character. We see his greatness, his majesty, his power, in the worlds that he has made,—in the storm, the tempest, the rolling ocean; but it is in such expressions as this that we learn, what we most desire to know, and what we cannot elsewhere learn, that he is *a Father;* that he is to be *loved* as well as *feared.* Nothing suggests more strikingly a state of helplessness and dependence than the condition of orphan children and widows; nothing, therefore, conveys a more affecting description of the character of God—of his condescension and kindness—than to say that he will take the place of the parent in the one case, and be a protector in the other. ¶ *And a judge of the widows.* That is, He will see justice done them; he will save them from oppression and wrong. No persons are more liable to be oppressed and wronged than widows. They are regarded as incapable of defending or vindicating their own rights, and are likely to be deceived and betrayed by those to whom their property and rights may be entrusted. Hence the care which *God* manifests for them; hence his solemn charges, so often made to those who are in authority, and who are entrusted with power, to respect their rights; hence his frequent and solemn rebukes to those who violate their rights. See Notes on Isa. i. 17. Comp. Deut. x. 18; xiv. 29; xxiv. 17; Ex. xxii. 22; Job xxiv. 3, 21; Jer. vii. 6; Mal. iii. 5; James i. 27. ¶ Is *God in his holy habitation.* Where he dwells; to wit, in heaven. The design of the psalmist seems to be to take us at once up to God; to let us see what he is in his holy home; to conduct us into his very presence, that we may see him as he is. What a man is we see in his own home,—when we get near to him; when we look upon him, not on great or state occasions, when he is abroad, and assumes appearances befitting his rank and office, but in his own house; as he is constantly. This is the idea here, that if we approach God most nearly, if we look upon him, not merely in the splendour and magnificence in which he appears in governing the worlds, in his judgments, in storm and tempest, riding on the clouds and controlling the ocean, but, as it were, in his own dwelling, his quiet heavens,—if we look most

6 God setteth the solitary in [1]families: he [h]bringeth out those which are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

[1] *a house.* [h] Ps. cvii. 10, 14.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when

closely at his character, we shall find that character best represented by the kind and benignant traits of a father, —in his care for widows and orphans. In other words, the more we see of God,—the more we become intimately acquainted with his real nature,—the more evidence we shall find that he is benevolent and kind.

6. *God setteth the solitary in families.* Marg., as in Heb., *in a house.* The word rendered *solitary* means properly one alone, as an only child; Gen. xxii. 2, 12, 16; and then it means *alone*, solitary, wretched, forsaken. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 20. The word rendered *families* would be more literally and better translated as in the margin, *houses*. The idea then is, not that he constitutes families of those who were solitary and alone, but that to those who are alone in the world—who seem to have no friends—who are destitute, wretched, forsaken, he gives comfortable dwellings. Thus the idea is carried out which is expressed in the previous verse. God is the friend of the orphan and the widow; and, in like manner, he is the friend of the cast out—the wandering—the homeless; —he provides for them *a home*. The meaning is, that he is benevolent and kind, and that they who have no other friend may find a friend in God. At the same time it is true, however, that the family organization *is* to be traced to God. It is his original appointment; and all that there is in the family that contributes to the happiness of mankind—all that there is of comfort in the world that depends on the family organization —is to be traced to the goodness of God. Nothing more clearly marks the benignity and the wisdom of God than the arrangement by which men, instead of being solitary wanderers on the face of the earth, with nothing to bind them in sympathy, in love, and in interest to each other, are grouped together in families. ¶ *He bringeth out those which are bound with chains.* He releases the prisoners. That is, He delivers those who are unjustly confined in prison, and held in bondage. The principles of his administration are opposed to oppression and wrong, and in favour of the rights of man. The meaning is not that he always does this by his direct power, but that his law, his government, his requirements are all against oppression and wrong, and in favour of liberty. So Ps. cxlvi. 7, "The Lord looseth the prisoners." Comp. Notes on Isa. lxi. 1. ¶ *But the rebellious dwell in a dry* land. The rebels; all who rebel against him. The word rendered *dry land* means a dry or arid place; a desert. The idea is, that the condition of the rebellious as contrasted with that of those whom God has under his protection would be as a fertile and well-watered field compared with a desert. For the one class he would provide a comfortable home; the other, the wicked, would be left as if to dwell in deserts and solitudes. In other words, the difference in condition between those who are the objects of his favour, and those who are found in proud rebellion against him, would be as great as that between such as have comfortable abodes in a land producing abundance, and such as are wretched and homeless wanderers in regions of arid sand. While God befriends the poor and the needy, while he cares for the widow and the orphan, he leaves the rebel to misery and want. The *allusion* here probably is to his conducting his people through the desert to the land of promise and of plenty; but still the passage contains a general truth in regard to the principles of his administration.

thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

8 The earth [i] shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even* Sinai [k] itself *was moved* at the presence of God,

i Hab. iii. 13. *k* Ex. xix. 16—18.

the God of Israel.

9 Thou, O God, didst [1] send a plentiful rain, [l] whereby thou didst confirm [2] thine inheritance, when it was weary.

10 Thy congregation hath

[1] *shake out.* *l* Deut. xi. 11—14. [2] *it.*

7. *O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,* etc. That is, in conducting them through the desert to the promised land. The statement in regard to the paternal character of God in the previous verses is here illustrated by his guiding his own people, when fleeing from a land of oppression, through the barren desert, —and his interpositions there in their behalf. All that had been said of him in the previous verses is here confirmed by the provision which he made for their wants in their perilous journey through the wilderness.

8. *The earth shook.* See Ex. xix. 16–18. ¶ *The heavens also dropped at the presence of God.* That is, dropped down rain and food. The idea is that the very heavens seemed to be shaken or convulsed, so that rain and food were *shaken down,*—as ripe fruit falls from a tree that is shaken. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxiv. 4. So also, Isa. lxiv. 1–3. The meaning is not that the heavens themselves dropped down, but that they dropped or distilled rain and food. ¶ Even *Sinai itself* was moved. This was true; but this does not seem to be the idea intended here, for the words "even" and "was moved" are not in the original. The Hebrew is, literally, "This Sinai;" meaning probably "this was at Sinai," —or, "this took place at Sinai." The correct translation perhaps would be, "The heavens distilled rain at the presence of God, this at Sinai, at the presence of God." ¶ *At the presence of God, the God of Israel.* The whole region seemed to be moved and awed at the presence of God, or when he came down to visit his people. The earth and the heavens, all seemed to be in commotion.

9. *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain.* Marg., *shake out.* Prof. Alexander, "a rain of free gifts." The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "a voluntary or willing rain." The Syriac, "the rain of a vow." The Hebrew word translated "plentiful" means free, voluntary, of its own accord—נְדָבָה, *nedabah*—(See Notes on Ps. li. 12, where it is rendered *free*); then it means that which is given freely; and hence, abundantly. It means, therefore, in this place, plentiful, abundant. The reference, however, is to the manna, with which the people were supplied from day to day, and which seemed to be *showered* upon them in abundance. The word rendered "didst send" means properly *to shake out,* as if God shook the clouds or the heavens, and the abundant supplies for their wants were thus *shaken out.* ¶ *Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.* Thou didst *strengthen* thy people when they were exhausted, or were in danger of fainting. In other words, God sent a supply of food—manna, quails, etc.— when they were in the pathless wilderness, and when they were ready to perish.

10. *Thy congregation hath dwelt therein.* In the land of promise; for the connexion requires us to understand it in this manner. The idea of the writer all along pertains to that land, and to the mercy which God had shown to it. After showing by an historical reference what God had done for the people in the wilderness, he returns here, though without expressly mentioning it, to the land of promise, and to what God had done *there* for his people. The word ren-

dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the [m] poor.

11 The Lord gave the word; great *was* the [1] company of those

m Matt. xi. 5. [1] *army.*

that published *it.*

12 Kings of armies [2] did flee apace; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

[2] *did flee, did flee.*

dered *congregation*—חַיָּה, *hhaiyah*—means properly a beast, an animal, Gen. i. 30; ii. 19; viii. 19; xxxvii. 20. Then it comes to be used as a collective noun, meaning a *herd* or *flock;* thus, a *troop* of men, an army or host, 2 Sam. xxiii. 11, 13; and it is applied here to the *people,* under the idea so common in the Scriptures that God is a Shepherd. ¶ *Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.* For thy flock considered as poor or wretched. That is, Thou hast provided for them when they had no resources of their own,—when they were a poor, oppressed, and afflicted people,—wanderers wholly dependent on thee.

11. *The Lord gave the word.* The command, or the order. It is not certain to what the psalmist here refers; whether to some particular occasion then fresh in the recollection of the people, when a great victory had been gained, which it was the design of the psalm to celebrate; or whether it is a *general* statement in regard to the doings of God, having reference to *all* his victories and triumphs, and meaning that in *all* cases the command came from him. The subsequent verses make it evident that there is an allusion here to the ark of the covenant, and to the victories which had been achieved under that as a guide or protector. The entire psalm refers to the ark, and its triumphs; and the idea here seems to be, that in all the victories which had been achieved the "word" or the command came from God, and that its promulgation was immediately made by a "great company" who stood ready to communicate it or to "publish" it. ¶ *Great* was *the company of those that published* it. Marg., *army.* More literally, "The women publishing it were a great host." The word used is in the feminine gender, and refers to the Oriental custom whereby females celebrated victories in songs and dances. See Ex. xv. 20, 21; Judges xi. 34; xxi. 21; 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. The idea here is, that when there was a proclamation of war,—when God commanded his people to go out to battle, and to take with them the ark, the females of the land—the singers—were ready to make known the proclamation; to celebrate the will of the Lord by songs and dances; to cheer and encourage their husbands, brothers, and fathers, as they went out to the conflict. The result is stated in the following verse.

12. *Kings of armies did flee apace.* Marg., as in Heb., *did flee, did flee.* This is the Hebrew mode of expressing that which is emphatic or superlative. It is by simply repeating the word. The idea is, that they fled speedily; they fled at once, and in alarm. The 12th and 13th verses are marked by De Wette as a quotation, and the language is supposed by him to be the substance of the song that was sung by the women as referred to in ver. 11. This supposition is not improbable. The reference is, undoubtedly, to the former victories achieved by the people of God when they went out to war; and the idea is, that when the command came, when God gave the word (ver. 11), their foes fled in consternation. ¶ *And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.* The women remaining in their homes, while the men went out to war. On them devolved the office of dividing the plunder, and of giving the proper portions to each of the victors. They would take an interest in the battle, and receive the booty, and assign the

13 Though ye have lien among the pots, [n] *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

[n] Ps. lxxxi. 6.

portion due to each of the brave soldiers, — the more acceptable as given to them by female hands. Possibly, however, the meaning *may* be, that the victors would bring the plunder home, and lay it at the feet of their wives and daughters to be divided among the women themselves. The dividing of the spoils of battle after a victory was always an important act. Comp. Judges v. 30; Josh. vii. 21; 1 Chron. xxvi. 27; Heb. vii. 4.

13. *Though ye have lien among the pots.* There are few passages in the Bible more difficult of interpretation than this verse and the following. Our translators seem to have supposed that the whole refers to the ark, considered as having been neglected, or as having been suffered to remain among the common vessels of the tabernacle, until it became *like* those vessels in appearance,—that is, until its brilliancy had become tarnished by neglect, or by want of being cleaned and furbished,—yet that it would be again like the wings of a dove covered with silver, as it had been formerly, and pure like the whitest snow. But it is not certain, if it is probable, that this is the meaning. Prof. Alexander renders it, "When ye lie down between the borders (ye shall be like) the wings of a dove covered with silver;" that is, "when the land had rest," or was restored to a state of tranquillity. De Wette renders it, "When ye rest between the cattle-stalls:" expressing the same idea, that of quiet repose as among the herds of cattle lying calmly down to rest. The Septuagint renders it, "Though you may have slept in kitchens." The words rendered "Though ye have lien" mean literally, "If you have lain," alluding to some act or state of lying down quietly or calmly. The verb is in the plural number, but it is not quite clear what it refers to. There is *apparently* much confusion of number in the passage. The word rendered "*pots*"—שְׁפָתַיִם, *shephat-taim*—in the *dual* form, occurs only in this place and in Ezek. xl. 43, where it is translated *hooks* (marg., *end-irons*, or *the two hearth-stones*). Gesenius renders it here *stalls*, that is, folds for cattle, and supposes that in Ezekiel it denotes places in the temple-court, where the victims for sacrifice were fastened. Tholuck renders it, "When you shall again rest within your stone-borders [that is, within the limits of your own country, or within your own borders], ye shall be like the wings of a dove." For other interpretations of the passage, see Rosenmüller *in loc.* I confess that none of these explanations of the passage seem to me to be satisfactory, and that I cannot understand it. The wonder is not, however, that, in a book so large as the Bible, and written in a remote age, and in a language which has long ceased to be a spoken language, there should be here and there a passage which cannot now be made clear, but that there should be so few of that description. There is no ancient book that has not more difficulties of this kind than the Hebrew Scriptures. ¶ Yet shall ye be as *the wings of a dove covered with silver*, etc. The phrase "yet shall ye be" is not in the original. The image here is simply one of *beauty*. The allusion is to the changeable colours of the plumage of a dove, now seeming to be bright silver, and then, as the rays of light fall on it in another direction, to be yellow as gold. If the allusion is to the ark, considered as having been laid aside among the ordinary vessels of the tabernacle, and having become dark and dingy by neglect, then the meaning would be, that, when restored to its proper place, and with the proper degree of attention and care bestowed upon it,

14 When [o] the Almighty scattered kings [1] in it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.

o Jos. xii. 1, etc. 1 Or, *for her, she was.*

it would become a most beautiful object. *If* the allusion is to the people of the land considered *either* as lying down in dishonour, *as if* among filth, *or* as lying down calmly and quietly as the beasts do in their stalls, *or* as peacefully reposing within their natural limits or borders, *then* the meaning would be, that the spectacle would be most beautiful. The varied tints of loveliness in the land—the gardens, the farms, the flowers, the fruits, the vineyards, the orchards, the villages, the towns, the cheerful homes—would be like the dove—the emblem of calmness—so beautiful in the variety and the changeableness of its plumage. The comparison of a beautiful and variegated country with *a dove* is not a *very* obvious one, and yet, in this view, it would not be wholly unnatural. It is not easy always to vindicate philosophically the images used in poetry; nor is it always easy for a Western mind to see the reasons of the images employed by an Oriental poet. It seems probable that the comparison of the *land* (considered as thus variegated in its beauty) with the changing beauties of the plumage of the dove is the idea *intended* to be conveyed by this verse; but it is not easy to make it out on strictly exegetical or philological principles.

14. *When the Almighty scattered kings in it.* The Hebrew here is, "In the scattering of [*i.e.* by] the Almighty of kings." The reference is to the act of God in causing kings to abandon their purposes of invasion, or to flee when their own countries were invaded. Comp. Ps. xlviii. 5, 6. The language here is so general that it might be applied to *any* such acts in the history of the Hebrew people; to *any* wars of defence or offence which they waged. It *may* have reference to the scattering of kings and people when Joshua invaded the land of Canaan, and when he discomfited the numerous forces, led by different kings, as the Israelites took possession of the country. The close connexion of the passage with the reference to the journey through the wilderness (vers. 7–9) would make it probable that this is the allusion. The phrase "*in it,*" (marg., *for her*), refers doubtless to the land of Canaan, and to the victories achieved there. ¶ *It was* white *as snow in Salmon.* Marg., *She was.* The allusion is to the land of Canaan. But about the meaning of the phrase "white as snow in Salmon," there has been great diversity of opinion. The word rendered "was white as snow" is correctly rendered. It means to be snowy; then, to be white *like* snow. The *verb* occurs nowhere else. The *noun* is of frequent occurrence, and is always rendered *snow.* Ex. iv. 6; Num. xii. 10; 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; 2 Kings v. 27; *et al.* The word *Salmon* properly means *shady,* and was applied to the mountain here referred to, probably on account of the dark forests which covered it. That mountain was in Samaria, near Shechem. Judges ix. 48. It is not known why the snow of *that* mountain is particularly alluded to here, as if there was any *special* whiteness or purity in it. It is probably specified by name only to give more vivacity to the description. There is much difference of opinion as to what is the meaning of the expression, or in what respects the land was thus *white.* The most common opinion has been that it was from the bones of the slain which were left to bleach unburied, and which covered the land so that it seemed to be white. Comp. Virg. Æn. v. 865; xii. 36. Ovid uses similar language, Fast. i: "Humanis ossibus albet humus." So also Horace, Serm. 1, 8: "Albis informem spectabant ossibus agrum." This interpretation of the passage is adopted by Rosenmüller, Gesenius, and De Wette.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; an high hill, *as* the hill of Bashan.

Others suppose it to mean that the land was like the dazzling whiteness of snow in the midst of blackness or darkness. This was the opinion of Kimchi, and this interpretation is adopted by Prof. Alexander. Tholuck supposes it to mean that, when war was waged on the kings and people, they fell as fast as snow-flakes on Mount Salmon; and that the idea is not so much the *whiteness* of the land, as the fact that they fell in great numbers, covering the land as the snow-flakes do. It is perhaps not possible to determine which of these explanations is correct. Either of them would accord with the meaning of the words and the general sense of the psalm. That of Tholuck is the most poetical, but it is less obvious from the Hebrew words used.

15. *The hill of God.* The phrase "the hill of God," or the mountain of God, is elsewhere applied in the Scriptures only to Mount Horeb or Sinai (Ex. iii. 1; xviii. 5; xxiv. 13; 1 Kings xix. 8), and to Mount Zion, Ps. xxiv. 3; Isa. xxx. 29. There is no reason for supposing that there is a reference here to Mount Horeb or Sinai, as the psalm does not particularly relate to that mountain, and as there is nothing in the psalm to bring that mountain into comparison with other mountains. The allusion is, I think, clearly to Mount Zion; and the idea is, that that mountain, though it was not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur,—though it had nothing in itself to claim attention, or to excite wonder,—yet, from the fact that it had been selected as the place where God was to be worshipped, had an honour not less than that of the loftiest mountain, or than those which showed forth the Divine perfections by their loftiness and sublimity. There is connected with this, also, the idea that, although it might be less defensible by its natural position, yet, because God resided there, it was defended by his presence more certainly than loftier mountains were by their natural strength. It should be remarked, however, that many other interpretations have been given of the passage, but this seems to me to be its natural meaning. ¶ Is as *the hill of Bashan.* Luther renders this, "The mount of God is a fruit-bearing hill; a great and fruitbearing mountain." On the word *Bashan,* see Notes on Isa. ii. 13; xxxiii. 9; Ps. xxii. 12. Bashan was properly the region beyond Jordan, bounded on the north by Mount Hermon or the Anti-Libanus, and extending south as far as the stream Jabbok, and the mountains of Gilead. The "hill" of Bashan, or the "mountain of Bashan," was properly Mount Hermon —the principal mountain pertaining to Bashan. The name Bashan was properly given to the country, and not to the mountain. The mountain referred to—Hermon—is that lofty range which lies on the east of the Jordan, and in the northern part of the country—a range some twelve thousand feet in height. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 6. It is the most lofty and distinguished mountain in Palestine, and the idea here, as above expressed, is, that Mount Zion, though not so lofty, or not having so much in itself to attract attention, was not less honoured, and not less safe, as being the peculiar dwelling-place of God. ¶ *An high hill,* etc. Or rather, a mount of peaks or ridges as Bashan. Mount Hermon was not a single hill, or a detached mountain, but a chain of mountains,—a range of lofty peaks or summits. So of Zion. It was by the presence and protection of God what Bashan was by its natural strength and grandeur. Comparatively low and unimportant as Zion was, it had in fact *more* in it to show what God is, and to constitute safety, than there was in the loftiness and grandeur of Bashan. The latter,

16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this* [p] *is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

17 The chariots of God *are*

[p] 1 Kings ix. 3.

twenty thousand, *even* [1] thousands [q] of angels: the Lord *is* among them *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.

[1] Or, *many thousands*.
[q] Deut. xxxiii. 2.

though thus lofty and grand, had no *advantage* over Zion, but Zion might in every way be compared with that lofty range of hills which, by their natural position, their strength, and their grandeur, showed forth so much the greatness and glory of God. The teaching would be, as applied to Zion, or the Church, that there is *as much* there to show the Divine perfections, to illustrate the greatness and the power of God, as there is in the most sublime works of nature; or that they who look upon the works of God in nature to learn his perfections, have no advantage over those who seek to learn what he is in his church.

16. *Why leap ye, ye high hills?* That is, with exultation; with pride; with conscious superiority. Why do you seem to regard yourselves as so superior to Mount Zion, in strength, in beauty, in grandeur? The Hebrew, however,—רָצַד, *ratzad*—rather means, "Why do ye watch insidiously? why do ye look askance at?" The word occurs only in this place. In Arabic it means to watch closely; to lie in wait for. This is the idea here. The mountains around Palestine—the mountains of the heathen world—the lofty hills—as if conscious of their grandeur, are represented as looking *askance*, in their pride, at Mount Zion; as eyeing it with silent contempt, as if it were not worthy of notice; as if it were so insignificant that it had no claim to attention. The idea is not that of "*leaping*," as in our English Bible, or of "*hopping*," as in the version of the Episcopal Prayer Book, but that of a look of silent disdain, as if, by their side, Zion, so insignificant, was not worthy of regard. *Perhaps*, by the high hills here, however, are disguisedly also represented the mighty powers of the heathen world, as if looking with contempt on the people of the land where Zion was the place of worship. ¶ This is *the hill* which *God desireth to dwell in*. The hill which *he* has selected as his abode, and which *he* has honoured above all the mountains of the earth, by his permanent residence there. As such, Zion has an honour above the loftiest hills and ranges of mountains in the earth. ¶ *Yea, the* LORD *will dwell* in it *for ever*. Permanently; he will make it his fixed habitation on earth. Notwithstanding the envy or the contempt of surrounding hills, he will make this his settled abode. He has chosen it; he delights in it; he will not forsake it for the mountains and hills that are in themselves more grand and lofty.

17. *The chariots of God.* The meaning of this verse is, that God is abundantly able to maintain his position on Mount Zion; to defend the place which he had selected as his abode. Though it has less natural strength than many other places have, —though other hills and mountains, on account of their natural grandeur, may be represented as looking on this with contempt, as incapable of defence, yet he who has selected it is fully able to defend it. He is himself encompassed with armies and chariots of war; thousands of angels guard the place which he has chosen as the place of his abode. *Chariots*, usually two-wheeled vehicles, often armed with scythes attached to their axles, were among the most powerful means of attack or defence in ancient warfare. See Notes on Ps. xx. 7; xlvi. 9; Isa. xxxi. 1; xxxvii. 24; Comp. Ex. xiv. 7; Josh. xvii. 16; Judges iv. 15. ¶ Are *twenty thousand*. A closer

18 Thou [r] hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou [s] hast received gifts [1] for men; yea, *for* the rebellious [t] also, that the LORD God might [u] dwell *among them.*

[r] Acts i. 2, 9; Eph. iv. 8.
[s] Acts ii. 4, 33. [1] *in the man.*
[t] 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.
[u] Rev. xxi. 3.

version is *two myriads,* or twice ten thousand. The original word is in the dual form. The language is designed to denote a very great number. A myriad was a great number; the idea here is that even *that* great number was doubled. ¶ Even *thousands of angels.* Marg., *many thousands.* The Hebrew is, *thousands repeated,* or *multiplied.* There is in the Hebrew no mention of angels. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "thousands of the rejoicing;" that is, thousands of happy attendants. The original, however, would most naturally refer to the chariots, as being multiplied by thousands. ¶ *The Lord* is *among them.* The real strength, after all, is not in Zion itself, or in the chariots of the Lord surrounding it, but in the Lord himself. *He* is there as the Head of the host; He, as the Protector of his chosen dwelling-place. ¶ As in *Sinai, in the holy* place. Literally, "The Lord is among them; Sinai, in the sanctuary." The idea seems to be, that even Sinai with all its splendour and glory—the Lord himself with all the attending hosts that came down on Sinai—seemed to be in the sanctuary, the holy place on Mount Zion. All that there was of pomp and grandeur on Mount Sinai when God came down with the attending thousands of angels, was really around Mount Zion for its protection and defence.

18. *Thou hast ascended on high.* That is, Thou hast gone up to the high place; to thy throne; to thine abode. The idea is, that God had descended or come down from his dwelling-place in the case referred to in the psalm, and that having now secured a victory by vanquishing his foes, and having given deliverance to his people, he had now returned, or reascended to his seat. This may either mean his throne on earth, or his abode in heaven. It would seem most probable that the latter is the idea. ¶ *Thou hast led captivity captive.* "Thou hast made captivity captive," or "Thou hast captured a captivity." The main idea is, that he had achieved a complete victory; he had led all his foes captive. The language *would* also express the idea that he had made captives for himself of those who were captives to others, or who were in subjection to another. As applied in the Christian sense, this would refer to those who were captives to Satan, and who were held in bondage by him, but who had been rescued by the Redeemer, and brought under another captivity — the yielding of voluntary service to himself. Those once captives to sin were now led by him, captives in a higher sense. See Notes on Eph. iv. 8. ¶ *Thou hast received gifts for men.* Marg., *in the man.* That is, *Among men,* or while among them as a conqueror. The idea here most naturally conveyed would be, that he had obtained "gifts," privileges, advantages, *in* man; that is, that men, considered as captives, constituted the victory which he had achieved—the advantage which he had acquired. It was not so much *for* them as *in* them, and *by* them, to wit, by possessing them as captives or subjects to him. With this victory achieved, he had now ascended on high. ¶ *Yea,* for *the rebellious also.* Or, more properly, *even the rebellious.* That is, Those who had been in a state of rebellion he had subdued to himself, and had thus led captivity captive. It was a triumph by which they had become subdued to him. ¶ *That the* LORD *God might dwell* among them.

19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits, even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

20 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation; and [v] unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death.

[v] Deut. xxxii. 39; Rev. i. 18.

Literally, *For the dwelling of Jah, God.* The idea is, that he had achieved such a triumph; he had so brought the rebellious under subjection to himself, that he could take up his abode with them, or dwell with them as his people. His rule could be extended over them, and they would acknowledge him as their sovereign. This would be applicable to a people in ancient times that had been subdued by the people of God. It might now be properly applied, also, to sinners who by the power of truth have been so subdued as to submit to God. It is applicable to all who have been conquered by the Gospel—whose enmity has been slain—who have been changed from enemies to friends—so that the Lord may dwell in their hearts, or rule over them. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul (Eph. iv. 8) to the Messiah, not as having original reference to him, but as suggesting language which would appropriately express the nature of his work, and the glory of his triumph. See Notes on that place.

19. *Blessed* be *the Lord,* who *daily loadeth us* with benefits, etc. Literally, *day, day;* that is, day by day; or, constantly. The words "with benefits" are not in the original, and they do not convey the true idea of the passage. The word rendered *loadeth* means to take up; to lift, as a stone, Zech. xii. 3; to bear, to carry, Isa. xlvi. 3. Then it means "to take up and place upon a beast of burden;" to load, Isa. xlvi. 1; Gen. xliv. 13. Hence it means to impose or lay a burden or a load on one; and the idea here is, "Blessed be the Lord God *even if* he lays a burden on us, and if he does this *daily;* for he is the God of our salvation." He enables us to bear it; he gives us strength; and finally he delivers us from it. *Though,* therefore, he constantly lays on us a burden, he as constantly aids us to bear it. He does not leave us. He enables us to triumph in him, and through him; and we have occasion constantly to honour and to praise his name. This accords with the experience of all his people, that however heavy may be the burden laid on them, and however constant their trials, they find him as constant a helper, and they daily have occasion to praise and bless him.

20. He that is *our God* is *the God of salvation.* Literally, "God is for us a God of salvation." That is, The God whom we worship is the God from whom salvation comes, and who brings salvation to us. It is not a vain thing that we serve him, for he is the only being who can save us, and he will save us. ¶ *And unto* GOD *the Lord* belong *the issues from death.* The *outgoings* or *escapes* from death. That is, He only can save from death. The Hebrew word means, properly, a going forth, a deliverance; then, a place of going forth, as a gate, Ezek. xlviii. 30; a fountain, Prov. iv. 23. Probably the only idea intended here by the psalmist was, that safety or deliverance from death proceeds solely from God. The sentiment, however, is true in a larger sense. All that pertains to deliverance from death, all that prepares for it, all that makes it easy to be borne, all that constitutes a rescue from its pains and horrors, all that follows death in a higher and more blessed world, all that makes death *final,* and places us in a condition where death is no more to be dreaded,—all this belongs to God. All this is under his control. He only can enable us to bear death; he only can conduct us from a bed of death to a world where we shall never die.

21 But God shall wound [w] the head of his enemies, *and* the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again [x] from Bashan; I will bring *my people* [y] again from the depths of the sea:

23 That thy foot may be [1] dipped in the blood [z] of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

24 They have seen thy goings,

w Hab. iii. 13. x Num. xxi. 33. y Ex. xiv. 22.

1 *red.* z Isa. lxiii. 1—6.

21. *But God shall wound the head of his enemies.* More properly, "God shall *crush* the head," etc. The idea is that of complete destruction,—as, if the head is crushed, life becomes extinct. See Gen. iii. 15; comp. Ps. cx. 6. ¶ And *the hairy scalp.* More literally, *the top of the hair.* The Hebrew word used here for *scalp* means the vertex, the top, the crown, as of the head, where the hair *divides itself;* and the idea is properly, *the dividing of the hair.* Gesenius, *Lex.* The allusion is to the top of the head; that is, the blow would descend on the top of the head, producing death. ¶ *Of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.* Of the man who perseveres in a course of wickedness. If he repents, God will be merciful to him; if he persists in sin, he will be punished. The literal rendering would be, "the hairy scalp *going on,* or going [sc. *about*] in his trespasses." The reference is to a wicked man *continuing* in his transgressions.

22. *The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan.* On the situation of Bashan, see Notes on ver. 15. There may be an allusion here to the victory achieved over Og, king of Bashan, in the time of Moses, Num. xxi. 33–35. The idea may be that as, at that time, a victory was achieved over a formidable enemy, so in times of similar peril, God would deliver his people, and save them from danger. Or, as Bashan was the remote frontier of the Holy Land, the meaning may be, that God would bring his people from the remotest borders where they should be scattered. Another meaning is suggested by Professor Alexander, viz., that as the subject referred to in the subsequent verses is the *enemy* of God, the meaning may be that God would bring back his enemies for punishment, even from the remotest borders, when they were endeavouring to escape, and even when they supposed they were safe. The first of these opinions is probably the true one. God would rescue his people, as he had done from the attacks of the mighty king of Bashan; he would deliver them, as he had brought their fathers from the depths of the sea. ¶ *I will bring* my people *again from the depths of the sea.* The words *my people* are not in the Hebrew, but they seem to be not improperly supplied by the translators. If so, the allusion is to the interposition of God in conducting his people through the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 22); and the idea is, that God would at all times interpose in their behalf, and deliver them from similar dangers.

23. *That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of* thine *enemies,* etc. Marg., *red.* A more literal rendering would be, "That thou mayest crush—thy foot in blood—the tongue of thy dogs from the enemies, from him." The idea of *dipping* the foot in blood is not in the passage directly; but the leading thought is that of *crushing* the enemy. It is then *added* that the foot would be in blood. So of the tongue of the dogs. The *meaning* is, that the tongues of dogs would be employed in licking up the blood of the enemies, though that is not *expressed* in so many words. The sense of the whole is, that the foes of the people would be slain.

24. *They have seen thy goings, O God.* That is, the lookers on in the solemn procession referred to in ver. 25; or, in other words, Thy goings

O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25 The singers [a] went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the

a 1 Chron. xv. 27.

damsels playing with timbrels.

26 Bless ye God in the congregations; *even* the Lord, [1] from the fountain of Israel.

[1] Or, ye that are *of*.

have been attended by pomp and magnificence, and have been witnessed by multitudes. The word "goings" here refers to the solemn triumphal processions which celebrated the victories achieved by God. ¶ Even *the goings of my God, my King.* The psalmist here speaks of God as *his* God and *his* King. The idea seems to have suddenly crossed his mind that this great God, so glorious, is *his* God. He exults and rejoices that He whom he adores is such a God; that a God so great and glorious is *his.* So the believer now, when he looks upon the works of God, when he contemplates their vastness, their beauty, and their grandeur, is permitted to feel that the God who made them is *his* God; to find consolation in the thought that his "Father made them all."

"He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and, though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers;—his to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"
TASK, Book v.

¶ *In the sanctuary.* Or, *to* the sanctuary; in other words, as the ark was borne to the sanctuary, the place appointed for its rest; for, as above remarked, the psalm seems to have been composed on such an occasion.

25. *The singers went before.* That is, in the removal of the ark; in the solemn procession referred to in the previous verse. *In* that procession those who sang preceded those who performed on instruments of music. Comp. 1 Chron. xiii. 8; xv. 16. ¶ *The players on instruments* followed *after.* The different classes of performers would naturally be ranged together. In 1 Chron. xiii. 8, the following instruments of music are mentioned as having been employed on a similar occasion, if not on this very occasion;—harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets. ¶ *Among* them were *the damsels playing with timbrels.* The true construction of the passage is, "Behind were the players in the midst of damsels playing." The singers and the players were surrounded by these women playing on timbrels. The word rendered "playing with timbrels"—תֻּפֵּף, *taphaph*—means to strike, to beat; and hence to strike or beat upon a timbrel. A timbrel is a kind of drum, a tabret, or tambourine, usually beaten with the fingers. See a description of it in the Notes on Isa. v. 12, under the word *tabret.* It is an instrument which has been in use from the remotest antiquity.

26. *Bless ye God in the congregations.* In the assemblages of the people; not only as individuals, but in solemn processions; in triumphal marches; when the people are assembled together. In this public manner acknowledge God as the true God, and render him praise. ¶ Even *the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.* Marg., "Ye that are *of*;" that is, *of the fountain of Israel.* The margin has undoubtedly expressed the correct idea. The appeal is to the Hebrew people represented as descending from

27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah [1] *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.

28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: [b] strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

[1] Or, with *their company*. [b] Isa. xxvi. 4, 12.

a common stock or ancestor—Jacob or Israel,—as a stream or river flows from a fountain. Comp. Notes on Isa. xlviii. 1; see also Isa. li. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 28. All the descendants of Jacob or Israel are thus called on to unite in solemnly praising the Lord their God.

27. *There* is *little Benjamin.* In that solemn procession. That is, the tribe of Benjamin is *represented* there; or, there are in the procession those who are connected with that tribe. The name "little" is given to the tribe either because Benjamin was the youngest of the sons of Jacob, or, more probably, because that tribe was among the smallest of the tribes of Israel. In fact, the tribe was so small, as compared with that of Judah, for instance, that, after the revolt of the ten tribes, the name of Benjamin was lost, and the whole nation was called, after the tribe of Judah, *Jews.* ¶ With *their ruler.* The word *with* is not in the original. The Hebrew is literally *ruling them.* This would seem to mean that, on the occasion referred to, Benjamin, or those who were connected with that tribe, had the oversight, or the direction of those who were engaged in this solemn procession. Though small, it had the preeminence on this occasion. To it was committed the important duty of presiding over these solemnities; that is, those who were prominent in the arrangements for the occasion were of the tribe of Benjamin. This seems to me to be a better explanation than to suppose, as Professor Alexander does, that it has reference to the enemies of the people of God, and that Benjamin had *conquered* or *subdued* them. ¶ *The princes of Judah.* The principal men of the tribe of Judah. ¶ And *their council.* Marg., *with their company.* The Hebrew word here—רִגְמָתָם, *rigmah*—means crowd, throng, band. It never means *council.* The idea is, evidently, that large numbers of the tribe of Judah attended,—that the "princes" or leaders were accompanied by throngs of their own people;—in allusion to the fact that Judah was one of the largest of the tribes of Israel,—and in contrast with Benjamin, which was few in number, and yet thus occupied the most honourable place as having *charge* of the arrangements. ¶ *The princes of Zebulun,* and *the princes of Naphtali.* These were remote or border tribes, and they seem to be mentioned here to show that all the tribes were represented; that is, that this was a national celebration. The fact that these tribes are mentioned as being represented on the occasion, proves that this psalm was composed before the revolt of the ten tribes, and the formation of the kingdom of Israel; that is, as *early* as the time of Solomon. This increases the probability that the psalm was written by David.

28. *Thy God hath commanded thy strength.* Has ordered thy strength to appear, or to be manifested. This is addressed, evidently, to the people of the land; and the idea is, that, on this occasion, God had called forth a full representation of the strength of the nation; or, as we should say, there had been a full "*turn out.*" It was an impressive sight, showing the real strength of the people. ¶ *Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.* Increase the strength thus manifested. Let it be still greater. The scene is now impressive and grand; make it still more so, by adding to the number and the prosperity of thy people. This is an illustration of the desire in the heart of every pious man that, whatever pros-

29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

30 Rebuke [1] the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: [2] scatter

[1] Or, *the beasts of the reeds*, Jer. li. 32.

[2] Or, *he scattereth.*

perity God may have given to his people, he would give a still larger measure,—that however greatly he may have increased their numbers, he would add to them many more. This desire of the heart of piety will not be satisfied until the whole world shall be converted to God.

29. *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem.* The word rendered *temple* here properly means a palace; then, the abode of God considered as a king, or his residence as a king. It might, therefore, be applied either to the tabernacle or to the temple, erected as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. As the word has so general a meaning, the passage here does not prove that the psalm was composed after Solomon's temple was reared, for it may refer to the tabernacle that David set up for the ark on Mount Zion. See Notes on Ps. v. 7; lxv. 4. ¶ *At Jerusalem.* Literally, *upon*, or *above* Jerusalem. Perhaps the idea is, that as the place of worship was built on Mount Zion, it was *above*, or seemed to *overhang* the city. The city was built mostly in the valleys that lay between the different hills or eminences—Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, Mount Ophel. ¶ *Shall kings bring presents unto thee.* In honour of God and his religion. Comp. Ps. lxxii. 10. See also Notes on Isa. xlix. 7, 23; lx. 5, 16.

30. *Rebuke the company of spearmen.* Marg., *the beasts of the reeds.* This is in the form of a prayer—"*Rebuke;*" but the idea is, that this *would* occur; and the meaning of the whole verse, though there is much difficulty in interpreting the particular expressions, is, that the most formidable enemies of the people of God, represented here by wild beasts, would be subdued, and would be made to show their submission by bringing presents,—by "pieces of silver,"—or, with tribute. Thus the idea corresponds with that in the previous verse, that "kings would bring presents." The rendering in the margin here expresses the meaning of the Hebrew. It *might* perhaps be possible to make out from the Hebrew the sense in our common translation, but it is not the *obvious* meaning, and would not accord so well with the scope of the passage. On the word rendered *company*, which primarily means an animal, see Notes on ver. 10 of this psalm. It is applied to an army as being formidable, or terrible, *like* a wild beast. The word rendered *spearmen*—קָנֶה, *kaneh*—means *a reed* or *cane; calamus.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xlii. 3; xxxvi. 6. This phrase, "the beast of the reeds," would properly denote a wild beast, as living among the reeds or canes that sprang up on the banks of a river, and having his home there. It would thus, perhaps, most naturally suggest the crocodile, but it might also be applicable to a lion or other wild beast that had its dwelling in the jungles or bushes on the banks of a river. Comp. Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44. The comparison here would, therefore, denote any powerful and fierce monarch or people that might be compared with such a fierce beast. There is no particular allusion to Egypt, as being the abode of the crocodile, but the reference is more general, and the language would imply that fierce and savage people—kings who might be compared with wild beasts that had their homes in the deep and inaccessible thickets—would come bending with the tribute money, with pieces of silver, in token of their subjection to God. ¶ *The multitude of the bulls.* Fierce and warlike kings, who might be compared with bulls. See Notes on Ps.

thou the people *that* delight in war.

31 Princes shall come out of [c] Egypt; Ethiopia [d] shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

[c] Isa. xix. 18—25. [d] Zep. iii. 10; Acts viii. 27.

xxii. 12. ¶ *With the calves of the people.* That is, the nations that might be compared with the calves of such wild herds,—fierce, savage, powerful. Their leaders might be compared with the bulls; the people —the multitudes—were like the wild and lawless herd of young ones that accompanied them. The general idea is, that the most wild and savage nations would come and acknowledge their subjection to God, and would express that subjection by an appropriate offering. ¶ Till every one *submit himself with pieces of silver.* The word here rendered *submit* means properly to tread with the feet, to trample upon; and then, in the form here used, to let oneself be trampled under feet, to prostrate oneself; to humble oneself. Here it means that they would come and submissively offer silver as a tribute. That is, they would acknowledge the authority of God, and become subject to him. ¶ *Scatter thou the people* that *delight in war.* Marg., *He scattereth.* The margin expresses the sense most accurately. The reference is to God. The psalmist sees the work already accomplished. In anticipation of the victory of God over his foes, he sees them already discomfited and put to flight. The mighty hosts which had been arrayed against the people of God are dissipated and driven asunder; or, in other words, a complete victory is obtained. The people that "delighted in war" were those that had a pleasure in arraying themselves against the people of God,—the enemies that had sought their overthrow.

31. *Princes shall come out of Egypt.* That is, Shall come and acknowledge the true God. Egypt is referred to here as one of the most prominent of the foreign nations then known; and the idea is, that the distinguished men of foreign nations—the rulers and princes of the world—would come and submit themselves to God, and be united to his people. The word rendered *princes* here—חַשְׁמַנִּים, *hhashmannim*—occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It means, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), the fat; then, the rich; the opulent; nobles. It is the word from which the name *Hasmonean* (or Asmonean), which was given by the Jews to the Maccabees, or Jewish princes in the time of the Jewish history between the Old and New Testaments, is supposed to have been derived. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac, render it *legates* or *ambassadors.* Luther renders it *princes.* The reference is undoubtedly to men of station or rank. ¶ *Ethiopia.* Heb., *Cush.* On the meaning of this word in the Scriptures, see Notes on Isa. xi. 11. ¶ *Shall soon stretch out her hands.* Literally, *Shall make its hands to run.* The expression denotes the eagerness or haste with which it would be done. The act is an act of supplication, and the reference is to prayer. ¶ *Unto God.* To the true God. The nation will supplicate the mercy of God, or will worship him. The idea, in accordance with that in the previous verses, is, that the country here referred to would become subject to the true God. It is a view of the future; of the time when the nations would be converted to the true faith, or would acknowledge the true God. Whether this refers to the Cush in Arabia, or to the Cush in Africa (Ethiopia as commonly understood), it is a description of what will yet occur; for all these lands, and all other lands, will be converted to the true religion, and will stretch out their hands in supplication and prayer, and will find acceptance with God. Even Africa—wronged, degraded, oppressed, injured Africa—will do it; and the worship of her children will be as acceptable to the Universal Father as

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old: lo, he doth [1] send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the [2] clouds.

35 O God, *thou art* terrible [e] out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he [f] that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed *be* God.

[1] *give.* [2] Or, *heavens.*

[e] Ex. xv. 11. [f] Isa. xlv. 24.

that of any other of the races of men that dwell on the earth.

32. *Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth.* That is,—that acknowledge the true God,—celebrate his praise. The psalmist sees the conversion of the world to God to be so certain an event that he calls on all nations to join in the song.

33. *To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens.* The highest heavens. The heaven of heaven would properly mean the heaven above that which is heaven to us; that is, the heaven above the sky. This is represented as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. The Jews were accustomed to speak of three heavens:—(*a*) The aerial heaven, or the region above us, where the birds fly, and the winds blow; (*b*) the starry heavens, or the firmament in which the stars are fixed; and (*c*) the heaven above all, the abode of God and of angels. The word *rideth* here means that he appears there as a conqueror, or that he moves in majesty and glory. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 10. ¶ Which were *of old.* The words "*of old*" refer here to the heavens, and denote their antiquity. He rides upon those ancient heavens. He occupies a position above those ancient works of his power. ¶ *Lo, he doth send out his voice.* Marg., as in Heb., *give.* The reference is to thunder. The design of this is to increase the impression of his majesty and power. ¶ And that *a mighty voice.* See Notes on Ps. xxix. 3, etc.

34. *Ascribe ye strength unto God.* Literally, *give.* That is, Acknowledge him as a God of power. Recognise his omnipotence in your worship. See Notes on Ps. xxix. 1. ¶ *His excellency* is *over Israel.* His majesty; his glory; his protecting care. The idea is, that his glorious character — his majesty — was manifested particularly in his protection of his people. ¶ *And his strength* is *in the clouds.* Marg., *heavens.* The Hebrew word rather means *clouds.* The idea is, that while his character as Protector was evinced particularly in his care of his people, his *power* was particularly seen in the clouds — the storm—the thunder—the lightning. Thus, all the manifestations of his character, alike in nature, and towards his people, are adapted to produce a deep and solemn impression in regard to his majesty and glory, or to lay the just foundation of praise.

35. *O God,* thou art *terrible out of thy holy places.* The places where thou dwellest, and from which thou dost manifest thyself. That is, The manifestations which thou dost make of thyself when thou seemest to come forth from thine abode are *terrible,* or are fitted to fill the mind with awe. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlv. 4; lxv. 5; lxvi. 5. ¶ *The God of Israel.* The God who is adored by Israel, or by his true people; our God. ¶ Is *he that giveth strength and power unto* his *people.* He is not weak and feeble. He is able to protect them. He shows that he can gird them with strength; that he can defend them; that he can sustain them in the trials of life. The God whom they acknowledge as their God is not one whose strength fails, or who is seen to be feeble and powerless when his aid is needed. He is fully equal to all their wants, and they never trust him in vain.

PSALM LXIX.

To the chief Musician upon *g* Shoshannim. *A Psalm* of David.

g Ps. xlv., *title.*

SAVE me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

¶ *Blessed* be *God.* For all that he is; for all that he has done. This is the language of joy and praise in view of the contemplation of his character as depicted in the psalm. At the close of every right contemplation of his character, his government, his plans, his claims, his law, his gospel, the heart that is right will say, *Blessed be such a God.* To one endowed with *such* attributes, praise—everlasting praise—is due.

PSALM LXIX.

This psalm is said in the title to be a psalm of David, but on what occasion it was composed is not there intimated, nor can it be determined from the psalm itself. There is nothing *in* the psalm which is inconsistent with the supposition that it was composed by David; and, in fact, it has, in many respects, a strong resemblance to not a few of his undoubted compositions, as Psalms vi., xxii., xxv., xxxv., xxxviii. Comp. Ps. xlii. On the expression in the title "To the chief Musician," see Notes in the Introd. to Ps. iv. On the words "upon Shoshannim," see Notes on the Title to Ps. xlv.

On what occasion in the life of David the psalm was written cannot now be determined. There were many occasions in his life to which all that is said in the psalm might be applicable, for his was a life of many trials and perils; but the most natural interpretation would be that which ascribes it to the time of the rebellion of Absalom. Some have supposed that it was written at a later period than the time of David. Thus De Wette maintains that the closing verses (34–36) demonstrate that it must have been written in the time of the exile. Rosenmüller coincides with that opinion in regard to those verses, but supposes that they were added to the psalm (as originally composed) by some later author. It will be found, however, on examination of these verses, that there is nothing in them inconsistent with the supposition that the entire psalm was composed by David. The psalm evidently pertains to an individual sufferer; a man who regarded himself as suffering in the cause of religion, or on account of his zeal for the service of God. It is this fact which is laid at the foundation of the psalmist's prayer for the Divine intervention. The author is a sufferer in the cause of God and of truth, and he beseeches God, in whose cause he suffers, on that account to interpose in his behalf.

There are several passages in the psalm which are applied in the New Testament to the Messiah and his times; ver. 9, comp. John ii. 17, and Rom. xv. 3; ver. 4, comp. John xv. 25; ver. 21, comp. Matt. xxvii. 34, 48 (Mark xv. 23, and John xix. 29); ver. 25, comp. Matt. xxiii. 38, and Acts i. 20. These passages, however, are of so *general* a character that they do not seem to have been designed to refer exclusively to the Messiah, or even to have had *any* original reference to him. The language is such that it *would accurately describe* the events to which it is applied; and the fact that the language is quoted in this manner in the New Testament history does not prove that the psalm had any original reference to the Messiah.

In the psalm, the sufferer first (vers. 1–6) describes his condition; he then (vers. 7-13) represents himself as suffering in the cause of God or of religion; then (vers. 14-18), prays to be delivered from these troubles. In vers. 19-21 he again adverts to his sufferings with a more explicit reference to their cause, the malice of his enemies; and then (vers. 22-28) prays that his enemies may be destroyed. He anticipates that his prayer will be heard, and that this will have a favourable effect on others, leading them to praise God (vers. 29–33); and this leads him to look forward to the general prosperity of Zion—to the fact that Zion will be delivered out of all its troubles—as laying the foundation for universal praise (vers. 34–36).

1. *Save me, O God.* That is, Interpose and deliver me from the dangers which have come upon me. ¶ *For the waters are come in unto* my *soul.* So as to endanger my life. Waters, deep, raging, overwhelming, are images of calamity or danger. See

2 I sink in [1] deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into [2] deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

3 I am weary of my crying;

[1] *the mire of the depth.* [2] *depth of.*

my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 They [h] that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would

[h] John xv. 25.

Notes on Ps. xxxii. 6. Comp. Ps. xlii. 7.

2. *I sink in deep mire.* Marg., as in Heb., *the mire of the depth.* This would denote either mire which was itself so deep that one could not extricate himself from it; or, mire found in a deep place, as at the bottom of a pit. Comp. Notes on Ps. xl. 2. An illustration of this might be drawn from the case of Joseph, cast by his brethren into a deep pit (Gen. xxxvii. 24); or from the case of Jeremiah, thrown into a deep dungeon: "And they let down Jeremiah with cords; and in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire," Jer. xxxviii. 6. ¶ *Where* there is *no standing.* No solid ground; nothing for the foot to rest on. ¶ *I am come into deep waters.* Marg., as in Heb., *depth of waters.* That is, waters where he could not touch the bottom,—an image of some peril that threatened his life. ¶ *Where the floods overflow me.* The waters. They break over my head. My life is *in danger.*

3. *I am weary of my crying.* The word *crying* here does not mean weeping, or shedding tears, but calling upon God for help. He had grown weary; his strength had been exhausted in the act of calling upon God to assist him. See Notes on Ps. vi. 6. This was an instance where one had called so long on God, and prayed so much and so earnestly, that his strength was gone. Comp. Matt. xxvi. 41. ¶ *My throat is dried.* Or, *is parched up.* The Hebrew word denotes to burn; to be enkindled; and then, to be inflamed. Here it means that by the excessive exertion of his voice, his throat had become parched, so that he could not speak. ¶ *Mine eyes fail.* That is, become dim from exhaustion. I have looked so long in that one direction that the power of vision begins to fail, and I see nothing clearly. See Notes on Ps. vi. 7. Comp. Job xvii. 7; Ps. xxxi. 9; xxxviii. 10. ¶ *While I wait for my God.* That is, by continued *looking* to God. The word *wait* is not here used, nor is it generally in the Bible, as it is now with us, in the sense of looking for *future* interposition, or of doing nothing ourselves in expectation of what *may* occur; but it is used in the sense of looking to God alone; of exercising dependence on him; of seeking his aid. This is indeed connected with the ordinary idea of abiding his will, but it is also an *active* state of mind—a state expressive of intense interest and desire. See Notes on Ps. lxii. 5.

4. *They that hate me without a cause.* Without any just reason; without any provocation on my part. There were many such in the case of David, for to those who rose up against him in the time of Saul, and to Absalom also, he had given no real occasion of offence. An expression similar to the one here used occurs in Ps. xxxv. 19. See Notes on that passage. The *language* is applied to the Saviour (John xv. 25), not as having had original reference to him, but as language which received its most perfect fulfilment in the treatment which he received from his enemies. See Notes on John xv. 25. ¶ *Are more than the hairs of mine head.* The number is so great that it cannot be estimated. ¶ *They that would destroy me,* being *mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.* Literally, "More than the hairs of my head are my haters falsely [those who hate me falsely]; strong are those destroying me; my enemies." The idea is, that

destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away.

5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my [1] sins are not hid from thee.

6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be con-

[1] *guiltiness.*

those who were numbered among his foes without any just provocation on his part were so numerous and strong that he could not contend with them. ¶ *Then I restored* that *which I took not away.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "What I did not rob, then must I restore." This seems to have a proverbial cast, and the idea is, that under this pressure of circumstances —borne down by numbers—he was compelled to give up what he had not taken away from others. They regarded and treated him as a bad man,—as if he had been a robber; and they compelled him to give up what he possessed, *as if* he had no right to it, or *as if* he had obtained it by robbery. This does not seem to refer to anything that was *voluntary* on his part—as if, for the sake of peace, he had proposed to give up that to which they had no claim, or to surrender his just rights, but to the act of compulsion by which he was *forced* to surrender what he had, *as if* he had been a public offender. How far it is proper to yield to an unjust claim for the sake of peace, or to act *as if* we had done wrong, rather than to have controversy or strife, is a point which, if this interpretation is correct, is not settled by this passage. It seems here to have been merely a question of *power.*

5. *O God, thou knowest my foolishness.* The errors and follies of my life. Though conscious of innocence in this case,—though he felt that his enemies hated him "without cause," and that they took what belonged to him and not to them, yet he was not insensible to the fact that he was a sinner, and he was not unwilling to confess before God, that, however conscious of uprightness he might be in his dealings towards men, yet towards God, he was a sinful man. From him he deserved all that had come upon him. Indeed the very calamities which had been permitted to come upon him were proof to his own mind that he was a sinner, and served, as they were doubtless designed, to turn his mind to that fact, and to humble him. The effect of calamities coming upon us, as reminding us of the fact that we are sinners, is often referred to in the Psalms. See Ps. xxxviii. 2–4; xl. 12. ¶ *And my sins are not hid from thee.* Marg., *guiltiness.* The word used here has always attached to it the idea of *guilt.* The meaning is, that God knew all his life; and that however unjust the conduct of *men* toward him might be when they treated him as if he had wronged them, yet considered as a part of the dealings of God, or as having been suffered to come upon him from God, all that had occurred was right, for it was a proper expression of the Divine displeasure against his sins. We may feel that we have not wronged our fellow-men; yet even the treatment which we receive from them, however unjust so far as they are concerned, may be regarded as deserved by us at the hand of God, and as proper on his part as an expression of his displeasure for our transgressions against him, and as a proof that we are sinners. Trial never comes to us from any quarter except as founded on the fact that we are sinners; and even where there is entire innocence towards our fellow-men, God may make use of their passions to rebuke and discipline us for our sins towards himself.

6. *Let not them that wait on thee.* Those who worship thee; those who are thy true friends. True piety is often, in the Scriptures, represented

founded for my sake, O God of Israel.

7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face.

8 I [i] am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

9 For [k] the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and [l] the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

i John vii. 5.

k John ii. 17. *l* Rom. xv. 3.

as waiting on the Lord. See Ps. xxv. 3, 5; xxxvii. 9; Isa. xl. 31. ¶ *Be ashamed for my sake.* On account of me; or, in consequence of what I do. Let me not be suffered to do anything that would make them ashamed of me, or ashamed to have it known that I belong to their number. I know that I am a sinner; I know that judgments come justly on me; I know that if left to myself I shall fall into sin, and shall dishonour religion; and I pray, therefore, that I may be kept from acting out the depravity of my heart, and bringing dishonour on the cause that I profess to love. No one who knows the evil of his own heart can fail to see the propriety of this prayer; no one who remembers how often men high in the church, and zealous in their professed piety, fall into sin, and disgrace their profession, can help feeling that what has happened to others *may* happen to him also, and that he has need of special prayer, and special grace, that he may go down into the grave at last without having brought dishonour upon religion. ¶ *Let not those that seek thee.* Another phrase to denote men of true piety—as those who are *seeking* after God; that is, who are desirous of understanding his character, and obtaining his favour. ¶ *Be confounded for my sake.* Let them not feel *disgraced* in me; let them not feel it a dishonour to have it said that I am one of their number, or that I profess to be united to them.

7. *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach.* In thy cause; in defence of thy truth; because I have professed to be a friend of God. The true reason why these calamities have come upon me is that I have been thy professed friend, and have endeavoured to do my duty to thee. The reproach connected with religion in a world of sin, or where true religion is hated, has fallen on me. ¶ *Shame hath covered my face.* The idea here is not that he had himself been ashamed of religion or of the service of God, but that he had suffered shame, derision, reproach among men for his professed attachment to the truth. Comp. Ps. xliv. 15, 16.

8. *I am become a stranger unto my brethren.* That is, They treat me as they would a stranger; as one in whom they have no interest, and whom they regard with no friendship. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxi. 11. ¶ *And an alien unto my mother's children.* A foreigner; one of another tribe or nation; one to whom they were bound by no tie of relationship. The allusion in the language "unto my *mother's* children" is intended to denote the most intimate relationship. In families where a man had many wives, as was common among the Hebrews, the nearest relationship would be denoted by being of the same *mother* rather than of the same *father*. See Notes on Ps. l. 20. The same thing occurs also where polygamy is not practised, in cases where a man has married more wives than one. The idea of the psalmist here, therefore, is, that his nearest relatives treated him as if he were a stranger and a foreigner. Comp. Job xix. 13–19.

9. *For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* My zeal—my ardour—in the cause of religion (that is, of thy pure worship) has been so great as to consume me. It has been like a devouring fire within me. Zeal is represented under the idea of heat—

10 When [m] I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a pro-

m Ps. xxxv. 13, etc.

verb to them.

12 They that sit in the gate speak against me: and I *was* the song of the [1] drunkards.

13 But as for me, my prayer

[1] *drinkers of strong drink.*

as it is in the Greek language; and the characteristics of heat or fire are here applied to it. This passage is quoted in John ii. 17, and applied to the Saviour, not as having had originally a reference to him, but as language which would accurately describe his character. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *And the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.* This, too, is applied, in the same way, to the Saviour, by the Apostle Paul, in Rom. xv. 3. See Notes on that passage.

10. *When I wept,* and chastened *my soul with fasting.* The words *and chastened* are not in the original. The literal translation would be, "And I wept [away] my soul with fasting;" that is, I gave myself so much to fasting accompanied with weeping, that my strength was exhausted. This refers to his acts of devotion; to his endeavours to discipline his soul so as to lead a strictly religious life. ¶ *That was to my reproach.* This may either mean that they accused him of hypocrisy and insincerity; or, that they charged him with folly for being so religious, so strict, so self-sacrificing, so serious, —perhaps they would say, so superstitious, so gloomy, so fanatical. The latter best accords with the connexion, since it was for his *religion* mainly that they reproached him, vers. 7–9.

11. *I made sackcloth also my garment.* I put on sackcloth. This was often done as expressive of grief and sorrow. See Notes on Ps. xxx. 11; xxxv. 13. Comp. Isa. xxii. 12; Dan. ix. 3. In the case here referred to, this was an act of religion; an expression of penitence and humiliation. ¶ *And I became a proverb to them.* A jest; a subject of derision; a byword. They ridiculed me for it. Comp. 1 Kings ix. 7.

12. *They that sit in the gate speak against me.* The gates of cities were places of concourse; places where business was transacted; places where courts were frequently held. See Notes on Job xxix. 7. Comp. Isa. xiv. 31; xxviii. 6; Ps. ix. 14. Calvin supposes that as the gates were the places where the judges sat to administer justice, the meaning here is that magistrates, or those who were high in rank and power, joined in the cry of reproach against him. The more probable interpretation, however, is, that he was subject to the reproach of those who were gathered around these places,—the men of business, and the idlers who were assembled there; or, as we should say, that he was the subject of "town-talk." ¶ *And I* was *the song of the drunkards.* Marg., as in the Heb., *drinkers of strong drink.* They made ballads or low songs about me. They selected me for an example in their drunken songs. David was not alone in this. It has not been uncommon that the songs of revellers and drunkards have been designed to turn piety and the pious into derision. Compare, alas! some of the songs of Burns. See Notes on Job xxx. 9; Ps. xxxv. 15, 16.

13. *But as for me.* In respect to my conduct and my feelings in these circumstances, and under this treatment. ¶ *My prayer* is *unto thee.* I indulge in no reproaches of others, and no recriminations. I do not permit myself to indulge in any revengeful feelings. I give myself to prayer. I look to God alone. I keep up my devotions, I maintain my habits of religion, notwithstanding their reproaches and revilings. I do not

is unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable [n] time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear [o] me, in the truth of thy salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

15 Let [p] not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit [q] shut her mouth upon me.

16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy loving-kindness *is* good: turn [r] unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: [1] hear me speedily.

n Isa. xlix. 8; 2 Cor. vi. 2. *o* Heb. v. 7.
p Isa. xliii. 1, 2.
q Ps. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 24, etc.
r Ps. lxxxvi. 16; Micah vii. 19.
[1] *make haste to hear me.*

allow these things to alter my course of life. Comp. Notes on Dan. vi. 10. ¶ In *an acceptable time.* A time that is well-pleasing to thee; a time when thou wilt hear me. See Isa. xlix. 8; lxi. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 2. This implies (*a*) that he had come to God when he was *disposed* to hear; and (*b*) that he had heard him, and had answered his requests. While others mocked, he continued to pray, and the Lord heard him. No time for prayer can be more "acceptable" to God than when others are reproaching us because we are his friends. ¶ *In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.* In the abundance of thy mercy; or, in thy abounding compassion. This was the substance of his prayer. ¶ *In the truth of thy salvation.* In the exercise of that faithfulness on which salvation depends; or which is manifested in the salvation of men. He prayed that God would show himself faithful to the promises which he had made to those who were seeking salvation.

14. *Deliver me out of the mire.* Out of my troubles and calamities. See vers. 1, 2. ¶ *And let me not sink.* As in mire. Let me not be overwhelmed by my sorrows. ¶ *Let me be delivered from them that hate me.* All my enemies. Let me be saved from their machinations and devices. ¶ *And out of the deep waters.* See vers. 1, 2. From my troubles.

15. *Let not the waterflood overflow me.* The stream; the volume of waters. The idea is that of a flood or stream rolling along, that threatened to drown him. ¶ *Neither let the deep swallow me up.* The abyss; the deep waters. ¶ *And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.* In his anguish and distress he passes here from the idea of running streams, and deep waters, to that of a well, pit, or cavern—representing himself as *in* that pit, and praying that it might not be closed upon him, leaving him in darkness and in mire, from which he could not then escape. The general idea in all these expressions is the same—that of overwhelming calamities from which he prayed to be delivered.

16. *Hear me, O* LORD; *for thy lovingkindness* is *good.* Thy mercy—thy favour—is *good;* that is, it is ample, abundant, great: it delights in deeds of mercy; in acts of benevolence. This was the only ground of his plea; and this was enough. Comp. Ps. lxiii. 3. ¶ *Turn unto me.* Incline thine ear unto me; turn not away, but be favourable to me. ¶ *According to the multitude of thy tender mercies.* See Notes on Ps. li. 1. He felt that he had occasion for the exercise of *all* the mercy of God; that the case was one which could be reached only by the exercise of the highest kindness and compassion.

17. *And hide not thy face from thy servant.* See Notes on Ps. xxvii. 9. ¶ *For I am in trouble.* In the midst of dangers and sorrows. Literally, "there is trouble upon me." ¶ *Hear me speedily.* Marg., as in Heb., *Make haste to hear me.* That is, Grant me without delay what I ask. The case

18 Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it: deliver me, because of mine enemies.

19 Thou hast known my [s] reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries *are* all before thee.

20 Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I [t] looked *for some* to [1] take pity, but *there was* [u] none; and for comforters, but I found none.

[s] Ps. xxii. 6, 7; Isa. liii. 3; Heb. xii. 2.

[t] Isa. lxiii. 5. [1] *lament* with me.

[u] Mark xiv. 50.

is one of urgent necessity. I *must* have relief or I shall perish. It is not wrong to ask God to interpose at once in our behalf when we are in trouble, though it is our duty to be patient and resigned if his interposition is delayed, for he may have important ends to accomplish by our continuing to suffer. In our distress on account of sin also, it is right to plead with him to interpose *at once*, and to relieve us by forgiveness. In this respect we are not to be contented with delay; we are to cast ourselves upon his mercy, and to plead for immediate pardon; for as it is our only safety, so it is for the honour of God that we should be forgiven, and that we should not continue in a state of guilt. An afflicted child of God will be safe in the final issue, whether he is relieved at once, or whether he is suddenly cut off by death, or whether he continues to suffer for even many years; but an unpardoned sinner is *not* safe for a moment, and if he should be cut off, unforgiven, even when under the deepest conviction for sin, he would perish. Every consideration, therefore, makes it proper that he should plead for forgiveness at once, and ask that God would not *delay* to show him mercy.

18. *Draw nigh unto my soul.* To me,—for my life is in danger. ¶ And *redeem it.* Ransom it; save it from ruin. See Notes on Isa. xliii. 3; xliv. 22. ¶ *Deliver me, because of mine enemies.* Because they are so numerous, so powerful, and so determined on my destruction. Comp. Ps. xiii. 4.

19. *Thou hast known my reproach.* The reproach that has come upon me; the shame and contempt which I am called to endure. God had seen all this; and the psalmist appeals to him as having seen it, as a reason why he should now interpose and save him. ¶ *And my shame, and my dishonour.* These are different words to express the same idea. They are accumulated here to denote the *greatness* of his distress. In other words, shame and reproach had come upon him in every possible form. ¶ *Mine adversaries* are *all before thee.* All who persecute and oppose me are constantly in thine eye. Thou knowest who they are; thou seest all that they do. Nothing in their conduct is concealed from thee. God, therefore, could take an accurate view of his troubles, and could see all the reasons which existed for interfering in his behalf.

20. *Reproach hath broken my heart.* The reproaches, the calumnies, the aspersions, the slanders of others, have crushed me. I am not able to bear up under them; I fail under the burden. Distress may become so great that life may sink under it, for many die of what is called "a broken heart." Undeserved reproaches will be as likely to produce this result on a sensitive heart as any form of suffering; and there are thousands who are crushed to the earth by such reproaches. ¶ *And I am full of heaviness.* Or, I am sick; I am weak; I am ill at ease. My strength is gone. ¶ *And I looked* for some *to take pity.* Marg., *to lament with me.* The meaning of the Hebrew word is to pity; to commiserate; to show compassion. Job ii. 11; xlii. 11; Isa. li. 19; Jer. xvi. 5. ¶ *But* there was *none.* There was no one whose heart seemed to be touched with compassion in the case; none who sympathized with me. ¶ *And for comforters.* For those

21 They [v] gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

[v] Matt. xxvii. 34, 48.

who would show sympathy for me; who would evince a friendly feeling in my distress. ¶ *But I found none.* He felt that he was utterly forsaken by mankind. There is no feeling of desolation like that.

21. *They gave me also.* My enemies; all persons around me. No one would show me even so much kindness as to give me food when I was hungry, or drink when I was thirsty. They utterly forsook me; they left me to die unpitied. Nay, they did more than this. When I was perishing with hunger, they not only refused to give me wholesome food, but they mocked my sufferings by giving me a bitter and poisonous herb for food, and vinegar for my drink. ¶ *Gall for my meat.* For my food. Or, they gave me this *instead* of wholesome food. The word here rendered *gall*—רֹאשׁ, *rosh*—is the same *in form* which is commonly rendered *head*, and occurs in this sense very often in the Scriptures. It is also used to denote a *poisonous plant*,—perhaps from the idea that the plant referred to was distinguished for, or remarkable for its *head*—as the poppy; and *then* the name may have been given also to some other similar plants. The word then comes to denote poison; venom; anything poisonous; and then, anything very bad-tasted; *bitter.* It is rendered *gall*, as here, in Deut. xxix. 18; Jer. viii. 14; ix. 15; xxiii. 15; Lam. iii. 5, 19; Amos vi. 12; *venom* in Deut. xxxii. 33; *poison*, in Job xx. 16; and *hemlock*, in Hos. x. 4. In Deut. xxix. 18, it is rendered, in the margin, *rosh*, or *a poisonful herb.* It does not occur elsewhere with any such signification. It may not be possible to determine precisely what is denoted here by the word, but it undoubtedly refers to some poisonous, bitter, deadly, stupefying substance given to a sufferer, *instead* of that which would be wholesome food, or fitted to sustain life. ¶ *And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* Instead of giving me pure water, they gave me sour wine—vinegar—that which would not slake my thirst, or which would not answer the purpose of drink. The form of trial here referred to is that where one is dying of thirst, and where, instead of giving water to assuage the thirst, one should give, in mockery, that which could not be drunk, or which would answer none of the purposes required. The word translated *vinegar*—חֹמֶץ, *hhometz*—is rendered in the ancient versions *sour grapes*, but the proper signification here seems to be vinegar—the usual meaning of the word. What is here stated to have been done to David was also done to the dying Saviour, though without any intimation that the passage here had an original reference to him,—or that what was done to him was intended to be a fulfilment of what is here said. See Matt. xxvii. 34, 48; Mark xv. 23; John xix. 29. In the case of the Saviour, they first gave him vinegar mingled with myrrh,—a usual custom in reference to those who were crucified,—for the purpose of deadening the pain, or stupefying the sufferer. Matt. xxvii. 34. At a subsequent part of the crucifixion they gave him vinegar, extended to him in a sponge affixed to a reed. Matt. xxvii. 48; John xix. 29. This was for a different purpose. It was to allay his thirst, and it seems (as the former may have been) to have been an act of kindness or compassion on the part of those who were appointed to crucify him. The former he refused to take, because he came to suffer; the latter he just tasted as he died. John xix. 30. The *coincidence* in the cases of David and the Saviour was remarkable; but in the case of the Saviour no further use is made of what occurred to David than to employ the *language* which he employed to describe his own sufferings. The one was not, in any proper

22 Let [w] their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been* for *their* welfare, *let it become* a trap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they [x] see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

24 Pour out [y] thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

25 Let their [1] habitation be

w Rom. xi. 8—10. *x* 2 Cor. iii. 14. *y* 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. [1] *palace.*

sense, a *type* of the other; nor does the language in the psalm refer to the Saviour.

22, 23. *Let their table become a snare before them.* These verses are quoted by Paul (Rom. xi. 9, 10) as descriptive of the character of persons in his time, or as *language* which would express what he desired to say. See the passage explained at length in the Notes on Rom. xi. 9, 10. The whole passage is a prayer that they might receive a proper recompense for what they had done. The word *table* here means the table at which they were accustomed to eat. As they refused food to a hungry man, the prayer is, that they might find the recompense for their conduct *in that very line;* or that, as they refused food to the hungry, they might find *their* food a "snare" to them. That is, Let it be the means of punishing them for their not giving wholesome food to the hungry, or for their offering poisonous herbs to a starving man. The word *snare* here means unexpected danger; danger sprung suddenly upon them,—as a snare is upon a wild beast. ¶ *And* that which should have been *for* their *welfare,* let it become *a trap.* Much of this is supplied by the translators. The literal rendering would be, "And to those at peace [or secure] a trap." The word here rendered *welfare* is the plural form of the word meaning *peace,* and may denote those who feel that they are at peace; that they are secure; that they are in no danger. The ancient versions give it the sense of *requitals,*—that is, a recompence for their transgressions; but the other signification best accords with the connexion. The word *trap* is usually applied to the devices for capturing wild beasts, and the meaning is, "Let the recompence come suddenly upon them, while they think themselves at peace, or when they are surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of life." This prayer is such as occurs frequently in the Psalms. It cannot be *proved* that it was uttered in a malignant spirit, or that anything more is intended by it than that the psalmist desired that justice might be done to all men,—an object which all magistrates, and all good citizens, should pray for.

23. *Let their eyes be darkened,* etc. See Notes on Rom. xi. 10. ¶ *And make their loins continually to shake.* As under a heavy burden. The apostle (Rom. xi. 10) varies the language, but retains the idea: "and bow down their back alway."

24. *Pour out thine indignation upon them.* That is, Punish them for their sins; or, do justice to them. ¶ *And let thy wrathful anger.* Literally, "the burning of thy wrath;" glow of anger; burning wrath. See Numb. xxv. 4; xxxii. 14; 1 Sam. xxviii. 18. This is undoubtedly a petition that God would visit them with the severity of his indignation; or, it expresses the belief of the psalmist that they *deserved* such tokens of his displeasure. ¶ *Take hold of them.* Seize upon them; overtake them when they expect to escape.

25. *Let their habitation be desolate.* Marg., *their palace.* The Hebrew word means properly a wall; then, a fortress or castle; and then it means also a nomadic encampment, a rustic village, a farm-hamlet. The word conveys the idea of an *enclosure,* with special reference to an encampment, or a collection of tents. The LXX. render it here ἔπαυλις, meaning a

[z] desolate; *and* let [1] none dwell in their tents.

26 For [a] they persecute *him*

[z] Matt. xxiii. 38. [1] *there not be a dweller.*
[a] Zech. i. 15. [b] Isa. liii. 4.

whom thou hast smitten; [b] and they talk to the grief of [2] those whom thou hast wounded.

27 Add [3] iniquity unto their

[2] *thy wounded.* [3] Or, *punishment of iniquity.*

place to pass the night in, especially for flocks and herds. The Hebrew word — טִירָה, *tirah* — is rendered *castles* in Gen. xxv. 16; Numb. xxxi. 10; 1 Chron. vi. 54; *palaces* in Cant. viii. 9; Ezek. xxv. 4; *rows* in Ezek. xlvi. 23; and *habitation* in this place. It does not occur elsewhere. Here it means their *home*,—their place of abode,—but with no particular reference to the *kind* of home, whether a palace, a castle, or an encampment. The idea is, that the place which they had occupied, or where they had dwelt, would be made vacant. They would be removed, and the place would be solitary and forsaken. It is equivalent to a prayer that they might be destroyed. ¶ And *let none dwell in their tents.* Marg., as in Heb., *let there not be a dweller.* That is, Let their tents where they had dwelt be wholly forsaken. This passage is quoted in Acts i. 20, as applicable to Judas. See Notes on that passage.

26. *For they persecute* him *whom thou hast smitten.* That is, instead of pitying one who is afflicted of God, or showing compassion for him, they *add* to his sorrows by their own persecutions. The psalmist was suffering as under the hand of God. He needed sympathy from others in his trials. Instead of that, however, he found only reproaches, opposition, persecution, calumny. There was an entire want of sympathy and kindness. There was a disposition to take advantage of the fact that he was suffering at the hand of God, to increase his sorrows in all ways in which they could do it. ¶ *And they talk to the grief of those.* What they say adds to their sorrow. They speak of the character of those who are afflicted; they allege that the affliction is the punishment of some crime which they have committed; they take advantage of any expressions of impatience which they may let fall in their affliction to charge them with being of a rebellious spirit, or regard it as proof that they are destitute of all true piety. See Notes on Ps. xli. 5–8. It was this which added so much to the affliction of Job. His professed friends, instead of sympathizing with him, endeavoured to prove that the fact that he suffered so much at the hand of God demonstrated that he was a hypocrite; and the expressions of impatience which he uttered in his trial, instead of leading them to sympathize with him, only tended to confirm them in this belief. ¶ *Whom thou hast wounded.* Literally, as in the margin, *thy wounded.* That is, of those whom *thou* hast afflicted. The reference is to the psalmist himself as afflicted by God, while, at the same time, he makes the remark general by saying that this was their character; this was what they were accustomed to do.

27. *Add iniquity unto their iniquity.* Marg., *punishment of iniquity.* The literal rendering is, "Give iniquity upon their iniquity." Luther understands this as a prayer that "sin may be made a punishment for sin;" that is, that they may, as a punishment for their former sins, be left to commit still more aggravated crimes, and thus draw on themselves severer punishment. So Rosenmüller renders it, "Suffer them to accumulate sins by rushing from one sin to another, until their crimes are matured, and their destined punishment comes upon them." An idea similar to this occurs in Rom. i. 28, where God is represented as having "given the heathen over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" [fit, or proper] "*because* they

iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written *c* with the righteous.

c Rev. xiii. 8.

29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

did not like to retain him in their knowledge." Perhaps this is the most natural interpretation here, though another has been suggested which the original will bear. According to that, there is an allusion here to the double sense of the equivocal term rendered "iniquity" — עָוֹן, *avon*—which properly denotes sin as such, or in itself considered, but which sometimes seems to denote sin in its consequences or effects. This latter is the interpretation adopted by Prof. Alexander. Thus understood, it is a prayer that God would add, or give, to their sin that which sin deserved; or, in other words, that he would punish it *as* it deserved. ¶ *And let them not come into thy righteousness.* Let them not be treated *as* righteous; as those who are regarded by *thee* as righteous. Let them be treated as they deserve. This is the same as praying that a murderer may not be treated as an innocent man; a burglar, as if he were a man of peace; or a dishonest man, as if he were honest. Let men be regarded and treated as they *are in fact;* or, as they deserve to be treated. It seems difficult to see why this prayer may not be offered with propriety, and with a benevolent heart,—for to bring this about is what all officers of justice are endeavouring to accomplish.

28. *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.* That is, Let them cease to live; let them not be numbered among living men; let them be cut off. This language is taken from the custom of registering the names of persons in a list, roll, or catalogue, Ex. xxxii. 32. See Notes on Phil. iv. 3. Comp. Rev. iii. 5. The language has no reference to the future world; it is *not* a prayer that they should not be saved. ¶ *And not be written with the righteous.* Let them not be registered or numbered with the righteous. As they *are* wicked, so let them be numbered; so regarded. Let them be reckoned and treated as they are. They deserve to be punished; so let them be. All that this *necessarily* means is, that they should not be treated as righteous, when they were in fact *not* righteous. It cannot be shown that the author of the psalm would not have desired that they should *become* righteous, and that they should *then* be regarded and treated as such. All that the language here implies is, a desire that they should be regarded and treated as they were; that is, as they deserved. The language is evidently derived from the idea so common in the Old Testament that length of days would be the reward of a righteous life (see Job v. 26; Prov. iii. 2; ix. 11; x. 27), and that the wicked would be cut off in the midst of their days. See Notes on Ps. lv. 23.

29. *But I* am *poor and sorrowful.* I am afflicted and suffering. The word here rendered *poor* often means *afflicted.* ¶ *Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.* Let thy help raise me up from my low condition, and exalt me to a place of safety.

30. *I will praise the name of God with a song.* As the result of my deliverance, I will *compose* a song or a psalm especially adapted to the occasion, and fitted to express and perpetuate my feelings. It was in such circumstances that a large part of the psalms were composed; and since others besides the psalmist are often in such circumstances, the Book of Psalms becomes permanently useful in the church. It is not always necessary now to *compose* a song or hymn to express our feelings in the

31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

32 The [1] humble shall see *this, and* be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that [2] moveth therein.

35 For God will save Zion, and will build [d] the cities of Judah;

[1] Or, *meek.*

[2] *creepeth.* [d] Ez. xxxvi. 35, 36.

circumstances in which we are placed in life,—for we may commonly find such sacred songs ready at our hand; yet no one can doubt the propriety of adding to the number of such by those who can do it, or of increasing the compositions for praise in the church in view of the ever-varied experience of the children of God. ¶ *And will magnify him.* Will exalt his name; will endeavour to make it *seem* greater; or, will spread it further abroad. ¶ *With thanksgiving.* I will use expressions of thanks to make his name more widely known.

31. This *also shall please the* LORD. This will be more acceptable to the Lord. ¶ *Better than an ox* or *bullock that hath horns and hoofs.* Better than a burnt sacrifice—horns, and hoofs, and all. The original here is, *horning and hoofing;* that is, an ox whose horns were fully grown, and whose hoofs were compact and solid; —a perfect animal in its kind, offered whole on the altar. The psalmist does not say that such an offering would *not* be acceptable to the Lord, but that the offering of the heart—the sacrifice of praise—would be *more* acceptable than any such offering in itself considered. This sentiment accords with the common language of the Old Testament. See Notes on Ps. xl. 6-8. Comp. Ps. li. 16, 17; 1 Sam. xv. 22.

32. *The humble shall see* this, and *be glad.* Marg., *The meek.* That is, Others who are thus afflicted—the poor, the needy, the oppressed, the sad—shall be made acquainted with what has been done in my behalf, and shall take courage, or be strengthened. They will learn to trust that God will also interpose in *their* troubles, and bring them out of *their* distresses. ¶ *And your heart shall live that seek God.* Shall be revived; shall be encouraged, strengthened, animated.

33. *For the* LORD *heareth the poor.* The needy; the humble; the unprotected. The reference is to those who are in circumstances of want and distress. The truth stated here is in accordance with all that is said in the Scriptures. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 6. See also Job v. 15; Ps. x. 14; xii. 5; xxxv. 10; lxviii. 10. ¶ *And despiseth not his prisoners.* He does not overlook them; he does not treat them as if they were worthy of no attention or regard. The word "prisoners" here may refer to those who are, as it were, bound by affliction under his own providential dealings; or to those who are oppressed, or are held as captives, or are thrown into prison, on his account. The particular reference here seems to be to David, and to those associated with him, who were straitened or deprived of their freedom in the cause of God.

34. *Let the heaven and earth praise him.* All things; all above and all below. ¶ *The seas.* The waters—the oceans. This is in accordance with what often occurs in the Scriptures, when all things, animate and inanimate, are called on to praise God. Comp. Ps. cxlviii. ¶ *And every thing that moveth therein.* Marg., as in Heb., *creepeth.* Comp. Notes on Ps. viii. 8. See also Notes on Isa. lv. 12.

35. *For God will save Zion.* See Notes on Ps. li. 18. That is, he will save his people; he will protect and defend them. This expresses the confident assurance of the psalmist

that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.

36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they *e* that love his name shall dwell therein.

e John xiv. 23; Rev. xxi. 27.

that, whatever might be the existing troubles, God would not forsake his people, but would interpose in their behalf. ¶ *And will build the cities of Judah.* Though they may now lie waste, or be desolate. See Notes on Ps. li. 18. The general idea here is, that God would be favourable to his land; that he would give success and prosperity to his people; that he would manifest his mercy to them. There is no necessity from the language used here to suppose, as De Wette and Rosenmüller do, that there is an allusion to the time of the exile, and to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, and that consequently either the whole psalm must have been composed at that time,—or (as Rosenmüller supposes) that the last verses of the psalm were added by a later hand, and that thus the whole psalm was adapted to the time of the exile. From ver. 9 it would seem that, when the psalm was composed, the place of public worship was still standing, and the language here, as in Ps. li. 18, is so general that it might have been employed at any time. ¶ *That they may dwell there,* etc. That his people may dwell there according to the ancient promise. The idea is, that he would be the protector of his people, and that all his promises to them would be fulfilled.

36. *The seed also of his servants.* The children or the descendants of his people. ¶ *Shall inherit it.* Shall continue to dwell in it. ¶ *And they that love his name.* They that love him; they that are his true friends. ¶ *Shall dwell therein.* They shall be safe there; they shall find there a home. This indicates the confident belief of the author of the psalm that the favour of God would be shown to the land. Whatever might be the present troubles, his faith was unwavering—his confidence unshaken—in regard to the faithfulness of God. Palestine—the promised land—would still be the inheritance of those who loved God, and the interests of those who dwelt there would be secure. As applied to the church of God now, the idea is, that it is safe; that it will always be under the Divine protection; and that it will be the loved and the secure abode of all that "love the name" of their God and Saviour.

PSALM LXX.

This psalm bears to the closing part of Ps. xl. (vers. 13–17, see Notes in the Introd. to that psalm) a resemblance similar to that between the fourteenth and the fifty-third psalms. The one is not indeed a mere copy of the other, but the one is substantially the same as the other, with some slight variations, apparently introduced to fit it for some new occasion on which it was to be used. We do not know what the occasion in either case was; but it would seem that in this instance, the psalmist found, in the closing verses of the fortieth psalm, language which *very nearly* expressed what he felt on some particular occasion, and which might, by a slight change, be applied to the use for which it was then desired.

We have no further knowledge of the *occasion* on which this was done, than what is implied in the title: *to bring to remembrance.* For the meaning of this, see Notes on the title to Ps. xxxviii. It determines nothing, however, as to the reason why the closing part of Ps. xl. was selected as the subject of a separate psalm, or why the changes were made which here occur. It merely denotes that there were things which it was proper to preserve in the recollection; or principles which it was of importance for the people of God to remember.

It will be necessary, in considering the psalm, only to note, in each verse successively, the alterations which are made from Ps. xl.

PSALM LXX.

To the chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David, to *f* bring to remembrance.

MAKE g haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to [1] help me, O LORD.

2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha!

4 Let all those that seek [h] thee [i] rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.

5 But I *am* poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou *art* my help and my deliverer: O LORD, make no tarrying.

f Ps. xxxviii., *title.* *g* Ps. xl. 13—17.
[1] *my help.* *h* Lam. iii. 25.
i Ps. xcvii. 12; Isa. lxi. 10.

1. *Make haste.* These words are supplied by our translators. The first word in Ps. xl. 13, rendered "*be pleased,*" is here omitted in the original. The psalm in the Hebrew begins abruptly,—"O God, to deliver me,"—leaving the impression that this is a fragment—a fragment commencing without even the care necessary to make the grammatical construction complete. ¶ *O God.* Heb., *Elohim.* In the corresponding place in Ps. xl. (ver. 13) the word is *Jehovah.* Why the change was made is unknown. The remainder of the verse is the same as in Ps. xl.

2. *Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul.* The only change here from Ps. xl. 14, is the omission of the word *together* which occurs there, and the omission of the words *to destroy it.* ¶ *Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.* This corresponds in the Hebrew entirely with Ps. xl. 14.

3. *Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame.* The only change which occurs in this verse is the substitution of the milder phrase "Let them be *turned back,*" for "Let them be *desolate.*" See Notes on Ps. xl. 15.

4. *Let all those that seek thee,* etc. The only change in this verse from Ps. xl. 16, is in the insertion of the word "*and*" in the beginning of the second clause,—"*and* let such as love," etc.

5. *But I* am *poor and needy.* This is the same as in Ps. xl. 17. ¶ *Make haste unto me, O God.* Heb., *Elohim.* In the parallel place in Ps. xl. 17, this is, "*The Lord thinketh upon me,*"—where the Hebrew word is not *Elohim,* but *Adonai* (Lord). The word "make haste" seems to have been introduced here by design,—thus carrying out the main idea in Ps. xl., but turning here to *petition* what is there stated as *a fact.* ¶ *Thou* art *my help and my deliverer,* etc. The close of the psalm is the same as the close of Ps. xl., except that the word LORD (Jehovah) is used here instead of *God* (Elohim). It is not possible to ascertain whether these changes were mere matters of taste, or whether they were designed to adapt the psalm to some new circumstance, or to the peculiar feelings of the psalmist at the time. There is no evidence that they are mere errors of transcribers, and indeed the changes are so made that this cannot be supposed. The change of the names Elohim, Jehovah, and Adonai, for example, is such as must have been by design, and could not have been made by copyists. But what that design was must remain unknown. The alterations do not in any way, as far as we can understand, affect the sense.

PSALM LXXI.

This psalm is without a title, as is the case with the first, second, tenth, and some others. Of course it is impossible to determine on what occasion it was

PSALM LXXI.

IN [k] thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion.

[k] Ps. xxxi. 1—3.

composed. There is some plausibility in the supposition that Ps. lxx. might have been placed before it, or in connexion with it, as a kind of introduction, or as indicating the character of the psalms among which it is found; but nothing of certainty can be ascertained on that point. It evidently belongs to the *class* of psalms which refer to the trials of the righteous; but it was rather in view of past troubles than of those which were then existing.

There is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed by David. If so, it was when he was advanced in life. There is, indeed, much in the psalm which would be appropriate to David,—much which he might have written; but there is no way now of ascertaining with certainty who was the author. In the Syriac version, the psalm is, indeed, ascribed to David, and this may perhaps express the prevailing idea in regard to the authorship as it had been handed down by tradition. The title in Syriac is, "Composed by David. When Saul warred against the house of David. And a prophecy respecting the passion and resurrection of the Messiah." The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint also ascribe it to David. The title in both is the same,—"By David. Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first captives." But these titles are of no authority, as they are not in the Hebrew, and they are of little historic value.

All that is known respecting the occasion on which the psalm was composed, whoever was the author, is, that it was composed when old age was drawing near, and in view of the trials and the blessings of life as considered from the contemplation of its approaching close, vers. 5, 9, 17, 18. The life of the author had been one of trials (ver. 20), but also of great mercies (vers. 6, 7, 17). He was then surrounded with difficulties; the infirmities of age were coming upon him, and he was encompassed with enemies (vers. 10, 11, 20); therefore he sought the continued favour and blessing of God in the little that remained to him of life.

It is a psalm of great value as describing the feelings of a good man when he is growing old, and is an illustration of what there has been occasion so often to remark in this exposition of the Book of Psalms, that the Bible is adapted to all the conditions of human life. In a book professing to be a revelation from God, and in a world where *old age*, with its trials, its infirmities, its recollections, and its hopes, must be so prominent in the actual state of things existing, it would have been unaccountable if there had been nothing to illustrate the feelings of those in advancing or advanced years,—nothing to suggest the kind of reflections appropriate to that period of life,—nothing to cheer the heart of the aged man, and to inspire him with hope,—nothing to prompt him to recall the lessons of the past, and to make use of those lessons to prepare him for the future; even as, in a world so full of trial, it would have been strange if there had been nothing to comfort the mind in affliction, and to enable men to derive proper lessons from the experiences of life. This psalm, therefore, is one of the most valuable portions of the Bible to a certain class of mankind, and may be to any of the living, as suggesting the proper reflections of a good man as the infirmities of age draw on, and as he reviews the mercies and the trials of the past.

It is not necessary to make a more particular analysis of its contents. The psalm, in general, embraces these points: (1) A prayer for deliverance from troubles, and from wicked men, vers. 1–4. (2) An acknowledgment of God's goodness in early life; a grateful review of Divine mercies manifested from the earliest years of life, vers. 5–8. (3) A prayer that God would still preserve him as old age came on; a prayer that God would interpose in his behalf, and enable him still to be useful to the world,—to that generation, and to the generations to come, vers. 9–18. (4) The expression of a confident expectation that his prayer would be answered, and that God would be merciful to him, vers. 19-21. (5) The expression of a purpose to offer praise to God as a suitable return for the mercies of the past, and for all that he hoped to receive in time to come, vers. 22–24.

1. *In thee, O* LORD, *do I put my trust.* See Notes on Ps. xxv. 2. Comp. Ps. xxii. 4, 5; xxxi. 1. ¶ *Let*

2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear [l] unto me, and save me.

3 Be thou [1] my strong habitation, whereunto [m] I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

5 For thou *art* my hope, [n] O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth.

l Ps. xxxiv. 15.
[1] *to me for a rock of habitation.*

m Prov. xviii. 10. *n* Jer. xvii. 7, 17.

me never be put to confusion. Let me never be ashamed; that is, Let me not be so disappointed in the trust that I repose in thee as to have occasion to feel ashamed that I have done it.

2. *Deliver me in thy righteousness.* See Notes on Ps. xxxi. 1. The first three verses of this psalm seem in fact to have been taken, with slight variations, from the first three verses of Ps. xxxi. ¶ *And cause me to escape.* That is, from impending dangers; from the power of my enemies. ¶ *Incline thine ear unto me.* In Ps. xxxi. 2, this is, "Bow down thine ear to me." The idea is the same. See Notes on that place. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 6. ¶ *And save me.* In Ps. xxxi. 2, this is, "Deliver me speedily."

3. *Be thou my strong habitation.* Marg., as in Heb., *Be thou to me for a rock of habitation.* That is, a rock where I may safely make my abode, or to which I may resort and feel safe. In Ps. xxxi. 2, this is, "Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me." The idea is the same. See Notes on that passage, and compare Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *Whereunto I may continually resort.* Where I may take refuge at all times, in all circumstances of danger. ¶ *Thou hast given commandment to save me.* There was some command, or some promise, on which the psalmist relied, or which he felt he might plead as the ground of his appeal. This may refer to some *special* promise or command made to the author of the psalm,—and, if the psalm was composed by David, there were many such; or the reference may have been to the general commands or promises made to the people of God as such, which he felt he was at liberty to plead, and which all may plead who are the friends of God. *We* cannot refer, as David could, to any special promise made to *us* as *individuals;* but, in proportion as we have evidence of piety, we can refer to the promises made to all the people of God, or to all who devote themselves to him, as a reason why he should interpose in our behalf. In this respect the promises made in the Scriptures to the children of God, may be pleaded by us *as if* they were made personally to ourselves; for, if we are his, they are made to us,—they are intended for us. ¶ *For thou* art *my rock and my fortress.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

4. *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked.* It is, of course, not possible now to ascertain who are particularly referred to here. If David was the author of the psalm, they may have been any of the numerous enemies that he had in his life. ¶ *Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.* Heb., "out of the *palm.*" This means here the same as hand, and refers to the *grasp* which any one makes in taking hold of a thing by the hand.

5. *For thou* art *my hope, O Lord* GOD. The ground of my hope and my expectation is in thee. (1) I have no other help; no other defence;—but (2) I *have* confidence; on thee I *do* rely. ¶ Thou art *my trust from my youth.* From my earliest years.

6 By [o] thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my [p] praise *shall be* continually of thee.

7 I am as a wonder [q] unto many: but thou *art* my strong refuge.

8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and with* thy honour all the day.

9 Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth.

o Ps. xxii. 9, 10; Isa. xlvi. 3, 4. *p* Ps. cxlv. 1, 2. *q* Zech. iii. 8.

The meaning is, that he had always trusted in God, and had always found him a helper. All that he was, and all that he possessed, he owed to God; and he felt now that God had been his protector from his earliest years. Perhaps it could not be shown certainly from this expression that he meant to say he had *actually trusted* in God from his youth, for the *language* means no more than that God had actually protected him, and holden him up, and had continually interposed to save and keep him. As God had always been his Protector, so he felt that he might come to Him now, and put his trust in Him.

6. *By thee have I been holden up from the womb.* From the beginning of my existence. The *idea* in all this is, that, since God had sustained him from his earliest years,—since he had shown his power in keeping him, and manifested his care for him, there was ground to pray that God would keep him still, and that he would guard him as old age came on. The sentiment in this verse is substantially the same as in Ps. xxii. 9, 10. See Notes on that passage. ¶ *My praise* shall be *continually of thee.* My praise shall ascend to thee constantly. I will not cease to praise thee. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 25.

7. *I am as a wonder unto many.* The word here rendered *wonder*—מוֹפֵת, *mophaith*—means properly a miracle, a prodigy; then things that are fitted to excite wonder or admiration; then, a sign, a token. See Notes on Isa. viii. 18. The meaning here is, that the course of things in regard to him—the Divine dealings towards him—had been such as to excite attention; to strike the mind as something unusual, and out of the common course, in the same way that miracles do. This might be either from the number and the character of the calamities which had come upon him; or from the narrow escapes which he had had from death; or from the frequency of the Divine intervention in his behalf; or from the abundant mercies which had been manifested towards him. The connexion makes it probable that he refers to the unusual number of afflictions which had come upon him, and the frequency of the Divine interpositions in his behalf when there was no other refuge, and no other hope. ¶ *But thou* art *my strong refuge.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. That is, God had been his Protector, his hiding-place.

8. *Let my mouth be filled.* This is an appeal to himself, in view of the goodness of God, to praise him always. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 28. ¶ With *thy praise.* With the expressions of praise. ¶ And with *thy honour all the day.* With such expressions as shall promote thy glory, and make thy honour known.

9. *Cast me not off in the time of old age.* When old age comes with its infirmities; its weaknesses; its trials. When my strength fails me; when my eyes grow dim; when my knees totter; when my friends have died; when I am no longer able to labour for my support; when the buoyant feelings of earlier years are no more; when my old companions and associates are gone, and I am left alone. Thou who didst watch over me in infancy; who didst guard me in childhood and youth; who hast defended me in manhood; who hast upheld me

10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that [1] lay wait for my soul take counsel [r] together,

11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him*.

12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adver-

[1] *watch*, or, *observe*.

[r] 2 Sam. xvii. 1, etc.

in the days of sickness, danger, bereavement, trouble,—do thou not leave me when, in advanced years, I have peculiar need of thy care; when I have reason to apprehend that there may come upon me, in that season of my life, troubles that I have never known before; when I shall not have the strength, the buoyancy, the elasticity, the ardour, the animal spirits of other years, to enable me to meet those troubles; and when I shall have none of the friends to cheer me whom I had in the earlier periods of my course. It is not unnatural or improper for a man who sees old age coming upon him to pray for special grace, and special strength, to enable him to meet what he cannot ward off, and what he cannot but dread;—for who can look upon the infirmities of old age as coming upon himself but with sad and pensive feelings? Who would wish *to be* an old man? Who can look upon a man tottering with years, and broken down with infirmities,—a man whose sight and hearing are gone,—a man who is alone amidst the graves of all the friends that he had in early life,—a man who is a burden to himself and to the world, a man who has reached the "last scene of all, that ends the strange eventful history,"—that scene of

> "Second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything,"—

that scene when one can say,

> "I have lived long enough; my way of life
> Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have,"—

who can think of all this, and not pray for special grace for himself should he live to see those days of infirmity and weakness? And who, in view of such infirmities, can fail to see the propriety of seeking the favour of God in early years? Comp. Eccles. xii. 1–6. ¶ *Forsake me not when my strength faileth.* As I may expect it to do, when I grow old. A man can lay up nothing better for the infirmities of old age than the favour of God sought, by earnest prayer, in the days of his youth and his maturer years.

10. *For mine enemies speak against me.* That is, they said substantially, as it is stated in ver. 11, that God had forsaken him, and that therefore they would arise and punish him, or treat him as an outcast from God. ¶ *And they that lay wait for my soul.* For my life; or, to take my life. The margin here—as the Hebrew—is, *watch*, or *observe*. The *watchers for my life*; that is, they who watch for an opportunity to take my life, or to destroy me. ¶ *Take counsel together.* About the best means of accomplishing their object.

11. *Saying, God hath forsaken him.* That is, God has given him over; he no longer protects him; he regards him as a wicked man, and we shall therefore not only be *safe* in our attempts upon his life, but we shall be *justified* in those attempts. ¶ *Persecute and take him.* It can be done safely now; it can be done with propriety. ¶ *For* there is *none to deliver* him. He has no one now to whom to look; no one on whom he can rely. Abandoned by God and by man, he will be an easy prey. Comp. Notes on Ps. xli. 7, 8.

12. *O God, be not far from me.* See Notes on Ps. xxii. 11. ¶ *O my God, make haste for my help.* See Notes on Ps. xl. 13.

13. *Let them be confounded* and

saries to my soul; let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

15 My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness *and* thy salva-

s Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18.

tion all the day; for s I know not the numbers *thereof.*

16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, t *even* of thine only.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto

t Isa. xlv. 24, 25; Phil. iii. 9.

consumed. See Notes on the similar passage in Ps. xxxv. 4. The sentiment in this verse is the same; the language is slightly varied. See also Ps. xl. 14, where the same sentiment occurs.

14. *But I will hope continually.* I will always cherish hope; I will not give up to despair. I will trust in God whatever may be the number, the power, and the confidence of my enemies. None of these things shall make me despair, for as long as I have a God, I have every ground for hope. No man should despair who has God for his Friend. Comp. Ps. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5. ¶ *And will yet praise thee more and more.* Literally, *I will add upon all thy praise.* That is, I will accumulate it; I will increase it. He saw abundant cause in the past for praising God; he had such confidence in him, and he felt such an assurance that he would interpose in his behalf, that he did not doubt that in the future dealings of God with him, he would have every reason to "*add*" to that praise.

15. *My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness,* etc. See Notes on ver. 8. The word *righteousness* here refers to the righteous character of God, particularly as manifested in his behalf; the word *salvation* refers to what God had done to deliver him from his dangers. ¶ *For I know not the numbers* thereof. That is, I cannot estimate the amount of thy favours; they are innumerable. See Notes on Ps. xl. 5.

16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord* GOD. In my future journey through life; in my trials; in my duties; in my conflicts; in my temptations. Admonished in the past of my own weakness, and remembering how often God has interposed, I will hereafter lean only on his arm, and not trust to my own strength. But thus leaning on his arm, I *will* go confidently to meet the duties and the trials of life. If one has the strength of God to lean on, or can use that strength *as if* it were his own, there is no duty which he may not discharge; no trial which he may not bear. The Hebrew here is, "I will come with the mighty deeds [more literally, *strengths*] of the Lord God." The word is used to denote the *mighty acts* of Jehovah, in Deut. iii. 24; Ps. cvi. 2; Job xxvi. 14. De Wette proposes to render this, "I will go in the mighty deeds of Jehovah;" that is, I will sing of his mighty deeds. Rosenmüller explains it, "I will go into the temple to celebrate his praise there;" that is, I will bring the remembrance of his mighty acts there as the foundation of praise. So Professor Alexander explains it. It seems to me, however, that our translation has expressed the true idea, that he would go in the strength of God; that he would rely on no other; that he would make mention of no other. Old age, trials, difficulties, arduous duties, were before him; and in all these he would rely on no other strength but that of the Almighty. ¶ *I will make mention of thy righteousness,* even *of thine only.* Of thy just and holy character. I will allude to nothing else; I will rely on nothing else as the foundation of my hope, and as my encouragement in the duties and trials of life.

17. *O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.* See vers. 5, 6. That

have I declared thy wondrous works.

18 Now also [1] when I am old

[1] *unto old age and grey hairs.*

is, God had guided and instructed him from his earliest years. He had made known to him his own being and perfections; he had made his duty plain; he had led him along the dangerous path of life. ¶ *And hitherto have I declared.* I have made known. That is, he had done this by public praise; he had done it by his writings; he had done it by maintaining and defending the truth. In all situations of life, up to that time, he had been willing to stand up for God and his cause. ¶ *Thy wondrous works.* See Notes on Ps. ix. 1; xxvi. 7. Doings or acts which were fitted to attract attention; to awe the mind by their greatness; to inspire confidence by their wisdom.

18. *Now also when I am old and grey-headed.* Marg., *unto old age and grey hairs.* This does not necessarily mean that he was then actually old and grey-headed, but it would imply that he was approaching that period, or that he had it in prospect. The time of youth was past, and he was approaching old age. The literal rendering would be, "And also unto old age and grey hairs, do not forsake me." This is the prayer of one who had been favoured in youth, and in all his former course of life, and who now asked that God would continue his mercy, and not forsake him when the infirmities of age drew on. ¶ *Forsake me not.* Still keep me alive. Give me health, and strength, and ability to set forth thy praise, and to make known thy truth. See Notes on ver. 9. ¶ *Until I have showed thy strength.* Marg., as in Heb., *thine arm.* The arm is the instrument by which we execute a purpose, and it thus becomes a symbol of strength. ¶ *Unto* this *generation.* Literally, *to a generation.* The reference is to the generation then living; that is, the generation which

" and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed [2] thy strength unto *this* genera-

u Isa. xlvi. 4. [2] *thine arm.*

had come on the stage since he had reached manhood,—the generation—the new generation—which one who is approaching old age sees engaged in the active scenes of life, cultivating the fields, filling the offices, constructing the bridges and roads, manning the ships, occupying the dwellings, instead of those with whom he was formerly associated, and who are now in their graves. His own generation —the companions of his own early years—had passed away. He had lived to speak to a new generation, and he was desirous that they should start on the journey of life with the advantage of his experience, as of one that had gone before. Each generation *may* thus enter on life with all the accumulated wisdom of the past; that is, as wise as those had become who had themselves had the experience, and treasured up results from the observations, of a long life. Society thus makes progress. One generation becomes wiser and better than the one which went before it, and the experience of all ages thus accumulates as the world advances, enabling a future age to act on the results of all the wisdom of the past. Man thus differs from the inferior creation. The animals, governed by instinct alone, make no progress. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlix. 13. They profit neither by the wisdom, nor the follies of the past. The first robin built its nest of the same materials, and with as much art, as the robin does now; the first stock of bees constructed their cells with as nice and accurate adaptations, with mathematical precision as complete, as a swarm of bees will do now. Neither the bird nor the bee has learned anything by experience, by study, or by observation, — nor lays up, to transmit to future generations of birds or bees, the results of its own

tion, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come.

19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high, [v] who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee!

20 *Thou,* which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt [w] quicken me again, and shalt

[v] Isa. lv. 9. [w] Hos. vi. 1, 2.

sagacity or observation. Not so with man. The result of the experiences of one generation goes into the general experience of the world, and becomes its capital; a new thought, or a new invention struck out by some splendid genius, becomes the common property of the race; and society, as it rolls on, gathers up all these results, as the Ganges or the Mississippi, rolling on to the ocean, gathers into one mighty volume all the waters that flow in a thousand streams, and all that come from rivulets and fountains, however remote. It is this which makes the life of *a man* so valuable in this world; this which makes it so desirable for a man, even when approaching old age, yet to live a little longer; for, as the fruit of his experience, his observation, his ripe wisdom, his acquired knowledge, he may yet suggest something, by writing or otherwise, which may add to the intelligence of the world; some principle which may be elaborated and perfected by the coming age. ¶ And *thy power.* Thy greatness; majesty; glory. ¶ *To every one* that *is to come.* To all future generations. That I may state truths which may benefit future ages. He who suggests one truth which the world was not in possession of before, is a benefactor to mankind, and will not have lived in vain, for that truth will do something to set the race forward, and to make the world better and happier. It is not a vain thing, then, for a man to live; and every one should endeavour *so* to live that the world may not be the worse—or may not go backward—by his living in it, but that it may be the wiser and the better:—not merely so that it may keep on the same level, but that it may rise to a higher level, and start off on a new career.

19. *Thy righteousness also, O God,* is *very high.* See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 5. The purpose of the psalmist is to exalt that righteousness as much as possible, and he, therefore, compares it with that which is high—the heavens—the highest thing of all. The literal rendering would be, "even to the high," or the height; that is, to the highest place. The passage is designed to express his confidence in God, in the infirmities and troubles which he must expect to come upon him with advancing years. ¶ *Who hast done great things.* In his work of creation; in his providence; in his manifested mercy towards his people. He had done things so great as to show that he could protect those who put their trust in him. ¶ *O God, who* is *like unto thee!* Who can be compared to thee! See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 10. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 18. See also Ps. lxxxix. 8; Ex. xv. 11; 2 Sam. vii. 22.

20. Thou, *which hast showed me great and sore troubles.* Or rather, Who hast caused us to see or experience great trials. The psalmist here, by a change from the singular to the plural, connects himself with his friends and followers, meaning that he had suffered with them and through them. It was not merely a personal affliction, but others connected with him had been identified with him, and his personal sorrows had been increased by the trials which had come upon them also. Our severest trials often are those which affect our friends. ¶ *Shalt quicken me again.* Literally, "Shalt return and make us live." The word *quicken* in the Scriptures has always this sense of *making to live again.* See Notes on John v. 21; comp. Rom. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 36; Eph. ii. 1. The plural form should have been retained here, as in

bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

22 I will also praise thee with the [1] psaltery, [x] *even* thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, [y] O thou Holy One of Israel.

23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

[1] *instrument of psaltery.* [x] Ps. cl. 3. [y] Ps. xcii. 3.

the former member of the sentence. The authors of the Masoretic punctuation have pointed this as if it were to be read in the singular, but the plural is undoubtedly the true reading. Alike in his affliction, and in his hope of the returning mercy of God, he connects himself here with those who had suffered with him. The language expresses firm confidence in the goodness of God,—an assurance that these troubles would pass away, and that he would see a brighter day. ¶ *And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.* As if he had been sunk in the waters, or in the mire. See Ps. cxxx. 1. The word here used means commonly *wave, billow, surge;* then, a mass of waters, a *flood,* the deep; then, a gulf, an abyss. The idea here is, that, instead of being on the mountain top, in a place of security, he had sunk down to the lowest point; he had, as it were, sunk *into* the very earth. Yet from that low estate he felt assured that God would raise him up, and place him in a condition of happiness and safety. This is one of the many instances which we have in the Psalms, where the psalmist in great trouble expresses the most entire confidence that God would interpose in his behalf.

21. *Thou shalt increase my greatness.* Thou wilt not merely restore me to my former condition, but wilt enlarge my happiness, and wilt do still greater things for me. ¶ *And comfort me on every side.* Literally, "Thou wilt turn thyself; thou wilt comfort me." The word also means to surround; to encompass (Gen. ii. 11, 13; 1 Kings vii. 24; Ps. xviii. 5); and the idea here may be that God would *go around him,* or encircle him, and would thus comfort him. This idea is expressed in our common version. It was the confident assurance of entire, or complete consolation.

22. *I will also praise thee with the psaltery.* Marg., as in Heb., *with the instrument of psaltery.* The Hebrew word is *nebel.* In Isa. v. 12 it is rendered *viol.* See Notes on that passage. It is rendered *psaltery* in 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Sam. vi. 5; 1 Kings x. 12; and elsewhere. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2. ¶ Even *thy truth.* I will make mention of thy truth and faithfulness in my songs of praise; or, I will celebrate these in connexion with appropriate music. ¶ *Unto thee will I sing with the harp.* Heb., *kinnor.* See Notes on Isa. v. 12. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2. ¶ *O thou Holy One of Israel.* The God of Israel or the Hebrew people; the God regarded by them as most holy, and worshipped by them as their God. This is the first time that this title occurs in the Psalms, but it is common in the Prophets, particularly in Isaiah. See Isa. i. 4; v. 19, 24; x. 20; xii. 6. It occurs also in Ps. lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18.

23. *My lips shall greatly rejoice,* etc. My lips will seem to be happy in the *privilege* of celebrating the praises of God. ¶ *And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.* Comp. Ps. xxxiv. 22. The word *soul* here seems to be employed to denote *the soul* properly, as we understand the word—the immortal part. The usual meaning of the word, in the Psalms, however, is *life,* and it is possible that the psalmist meant merely to say here that the *life* which had been spared should find pleasure in celebrating the praises of

24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

God; but there is no impropriety in supposing that he has reference to his higher—his immortal—nature.

24. *My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness.* Thy righteous character; the truthfulness, the goodness, the fidelity which thou hast manifested in delivering me. The word rendered *talk* means properly to meditate; then, to think aloud, to talk to oneself; and the idea may be, that his mind would be so full of the subject that he would give utterance to his thoughts in audible expressions when alone. It denotes fulness of heart, and language naturally flowing out from a full soul. ¶ *All the day long.* Continually. This shall occupy my mind at all times. See Notes on Ps. i. 2. ¶ *For they are confounded,* etc. That is, they are put to confusion; they are disappointed in their hopes; they are defeated in their plans. The psalmist sees this to be so certain that he speaks of it as if it were already done. The Psalms often conclude in this way. They begin in trouble, they end in joy; they begin in darkness, they end in light; they begin with a desponding mind, they end with a triumphant spirit; they begin with prayer, they end in praise. On the *language* used here, see Notes on ver. 13. On such a *close* of the Psalms, see Ps. iii. 7, 8; vi. 9, 10; vii. 17; xvii. 15; xxii. 30, 31; xxvi. 12; xlii. 11; xliii. 5; lii, 8, 9.

PSALM LXXII.

The title of this psalm, in the original, is simply "*For Solomon.*" The words "*a psalm*" are supplied by the translators. In the margin this is "*of;*" to wit, of Solomon,—as if Solomon were the writer. Prof. Alexander renders it, "By Solomon," and supposes, of course, that he was the author. The Septuagint renders it, "For" — εἰς — "Solomon." So the Latin Vulgate: "In Salomonem." The Syriac: "Of David; when he constituted Solomon king." Luther: "Of Solomon." It is true that the Hebrew in the title is the same which is used in other psalms where the author is designated, as in Ps. lxviii., lxix., lxx., and elsewhere, "of David;" in Ps. lxxiii., lxxiv., and elsewhere, "of Asaph," etc.; and it is true that the mode of expression would most *naturally* convey the idea that Solomon was the author; but it is also true that this construction is not necessary, as is shown by the fact that it is understood otherwise by the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac, and by the author of the Chaldee Paraphrase. No one can doubt that the Hebrew is susceptible of this latter interpretation, (see Gesenius on the letter ל), and that the translation "*for* Solomon" is a fair rendering. The contents of the psalm also demand this construction here. It is wholly improbable that Solomon would pen the predictions in the psalm as referring to himself; but not at all improbable that David would utter these predictions and prayers in reference to his son about to ascend the throne. The language of the psalm is every way appropriate to the supposition that it was composed by David in view of the anticipated glories and the peaceful reign of his son and successor, as an inspired production indicating what that reign would be, and looking onward to the still more glorious and peaceful reign of the Messiah as king. It seems to me, therefore, that the evidence is sufficiently clear that the psalm was composed in reference to Solomon, and not by him; and, if so, the most natural supposition is that it was composed by David. The evidence, indeed, is not positive, but it is such probable evidence as to leave little room for doubt.

It is a question of much importance whether the psalm had original reference to Solomon alone, or whether it had a reference to the Messiah, and is to be reckoned among the Messianic psalms. That it was applicable to the reign of Solomon, as a reign of peace and prosperity, there can be no doubt, and there seems to be as little reason to doubt that it was *intended* to describe his reign, and that the principal images in the psalm are taken from what it was foreseen would characterise his government; but that it also had reference to the Messiah,

and to his reign, will be apparent, I think, from the following considerations:—

(1) The testimony of tradition. Thus the ancient Chaldee Paraphrase, which undoubtedly gives the prevailing opinion of the ancient Jews, regards it as referring to the Messiah. The first verse of the psalm is thus rendered in that Paraphrase: "O God, give the knowledge of thy judgments to the king the Messiah — לְמַלְכָּא מְשִׁיחָא — and thy righteousness to the sons of David the king." The older Jewish writers, according to Schöttgen, agreed in applying it to the Messiah.

(2) The fact that it is not applicable, in the fulness of its meaning, to the reign of Solomon. It is true that the psalm describes the general characteristics of that reign as one of peace and prosperity; but it is also true, as will be seen in the progress of the explanation of the psalm, that there are passages in it which cannot be well applied to him, or which have a fulness of meaning — an amplitude of signification — which requires an application to some other state of things than that which occurred under his rule.

(3) The psalm *is* applicable to the Messiah, and accords in its general character, and in the particular expressions, with the other descriptions of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Comp. vers. 2, 4, with Isa. xi. 4;—ver. 3, with Isa. ix. 6;—ver. 5, with Isa. ix. 7. See also vers. 8, 11, 17. It will be shown in the exposition of these verses that they accurately describe the state of things under the Messiah, and that they cannot be literally applied to the reign of Solomon.

(4) It may be added that this interpretation is in accordance with the prevalent style of the Old Testament. No one can doubt, however the fact may be explained, that the writers of the Old Testament *did* look forward to a remarkable personage who was to appear in the future. Whether the reality of the inspiration of the Prophets is admitted or denied, they somehow had conceived *that notion*, and this idea is constantly manifesting itself in their writings. They delight to dwell upon the prospect of his appearing; they dwell with pleasure on his characteristics; they turn to him in times of national trouble; they anticipate final deliverance under him alone. They describe him as clothed with regal magnificence; they exalt him to the highest rank; they represent him as most beautiful in character, and most mighty in power; they apply to him the most exalted names;—priest; prophet; prince; king; warrior; angel; *God*. We are not surprised to find the sacred writers recurring to this idea at any time, whatever may be the subject on which they are writing; and to think of the Old Testament *without a Messiah*, would be much the same as to think of the Iliad without Achilles; or the Æneid without Æneas; or "Hamlet" without Hamlet. It is for those who deny the inspiration of the Prophets to explain *how* this idea sprang up in their minds; they cannot deny the fact that it was there. There is, perhaps, no part of the Old Testament where this is more manifest than in the psalm before us. It bears all the marks of having been composed under the influence of such an idea.

The psalm consists of two parts:—

I. A description of the reign of the "king"—the Messiah, vers. 1–17.

II. A doxology, vers. 18, 19.

I. A description of the reign of the "king" — the Messiah. That reign would be

(1) A reign of righteousness. Justice would be done to all; the poor and down-trodden would be protected; prosperity would attend the righteous; the whole course of the administration would be in favour of virtue and religion, vers. 1–7.

(2) The reign would be universal, vers. 8–11. The king would have dominion from sea to sea; foreign princes would send him presents; all kings would bow down before him; and all nations would serve him.

(3) It would be a reign of benevolence; a reign that would have special regard for the poor, the needy, and the oppressed, vers. 12–14.

(4) It would be perpetual; it would spread afar, and endure for ever, vers. 15–17.

II. The doxology, vers. 18, 19;—a doxology eminently appropriate in view of the prospective glories of the reign of the Messiah. For such a kingdom, for such a reign of glory and beneficence, for such mercy shown to mankind in the prospect of setting up such a dominion, it was meet that the heart should be filled with adoration, and that the

PSALM LXXII.

A Psalm [1] for Solomon.

GIVE [z] the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

[1] Or, *of*, Ps. cxxvii., *title*.
[z] 1 Kings i. 36, 37.

2 He [a] shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

3 The mountains [b] shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

[a] Isa. xi. 2—5; xxxii. 1. [b] Ps. lxxxv. 11, 12.

lips should pour forth blessings on the name of God.

To the psalm a postscript is added, (ver. 20), intimating that this was the close of the collection of psalms ascribed to David. On the meaning of this, see Notes on the verse.

1. *Give the king.* Supposing the psalm to have been composed by David in view of the inauguration of his son and successor, this is a prayer that God would bestow on him the qualifications which would tend to secure a just, a protracted, and a peaceful reign. Though it is to be admitted that the psalm was designed to refer ultimately to the Messiah, and to be descriptive of *his* reign, yet there is no impropriety in supposing that the psalmist believed the reign of Solomon would be, in some proper sense emblematic of that reign, and that it was his desire the reign of the one *might*, as far as possible, resemble that of the other. There is no improbability, therefore, in supposing that the mind of the psalmist might have been directed to both in the composition of the psalm, and that while he used the language of prayer for the one, his eye was mainly directed to the characteristics of the other. ¶ *Thy judgments.* Knowledge; authority; ability to execute thy judgments, or thy laws. That is, he speaks of the king as appointed to administer justice; to maintain the laws of God, and to exercise judicial power. It is one of the primary ideas in the character of a king that he is the fountain of justice; the maker of the laws; the dispenser of right to all his subjects. The officers of the law administer justice *under* him; the last appeal is to him. ¶ *And thy righteousness.* That is, Clothe him, in the administration of justice, with a righteousness like thine own. Let it be seen that he represents *thee;* that his government may be regarded as thine own administration through him. ¶ *Unto the king's son.* Not only to him, but to his successor; that is, let the administration of justice in the government be perpetuated. There is no improbability in supposing that in this the psalmist may have designed also to refer to the last and the greatest of his successors in the line—the Messiah.

2. *He shall judge thy people with righteousness.* On this verse see Notes on Isa. xi. 3, 4. The fact that this so entirely accords with the description in Isa. xi., which undoubtedly refers to the Messiah, has been alluded to above as confirming the opinion that the psalm has a similar reference.

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people.* The idea in this verse is that the land would be full of peace and the fruits of peace. All parts of it would be covered with the evidences that it was a land of quietness and security, where men could pursue their callings in safety, and enjoy the fruit of their labours. On the mountains and on all the little hills in the land there would be abundant harvests, the result of peace (so strongly in contrast with the desolations of war)—all showing the advantages of a peaceful reign. It is to be remembered that Judea is a country abounding in hills and mountains, and that a great part of its former fertility resulted from terracing the hills, and cultivating them as far as possible towards the summit. The idea here is, that one who should look upon the land,—who could take in at a glance the whole

4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.[c]

5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

6 He shall come down like rain upon[d] the mown grass; as showers *that* water the earth.

[c] Isa. li. 12, 13; Rev. xii. 10.

[d] 2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Hos. vi. 3.

country,—would see those mountains and hills cultivated in the most careful manner, and everywhere bringing forth the productions of peace. Comp. Ps. lxv. 11–13. See also Notes on Ps. lxxxv. 11, 12. ¶ *And the little hills, by righteousness.* That is, By the prevalence of righteousness, or under a reign of righteousness, the little hills would furnish illustrations of the influence of a reign of peace. Everywhere there would be the effects of a reign of peace. The whole land would be cultivated, and there would be abundance. Peace always produces these blessings; war always spreads desolation.

4. *He shall judge the poor of the people.* The afflicted; the down-trodden; the needy. He would vindicate their cause against their oppressors; his reign would be one of impartial justice, under which the rights of the poor as well as of the rich would be respected. See Notes on Isa. xi. 4. ¶ *He shall save the children of the needy.* Those in humble life; those most likely to be oppressed by others; those who have no natural protectors. ¶ *And shall break in pieces the oppressor.* Shall subdue, or destroy, those who live to oppress others. See Notes on Ps. xii. 5.

5. *They shall fear thee.* That is, *men* shall fear thee, or thou shalt be feared, or reverenced. The idea is, that his reign would continue, or that he would be obeyed during all the time here mentioned. ¶ *As long as the sun and moon endure.* Literally, "With the sun, and before the moon;" that is, as long as they have the sun with them, or have it to shine upon them, and as long as they are in the presence of the moon, or have its light. In other words, they would continue to the end of time; or to the end of the world. It does not denote *eternity*, for it is not assumed in the Bible that the sun and moon will continue for ever; but the idea is, that as long as the sun shall continue to shine upon the earth—as long as men shall dwell upon the earth—the kingdom would be perpetual. There would be no change of dynasty; no new empire would arise to displace and to supersede this. This would be the dynasty under which the affairs of the world would be wound up; this the kingdom which would be found at the consummation of all things. The reign of the Messiah will be the *final* reign in the earth; that under which the affairs of earth will close. ¶ *Throughout all generations.* While the generations of men dwell on the earth.

6. *He shall come down.* That is, The influence of his reign will be like fertilising showers. The word "*he*" in this place might have been "*it*," referring to his reign, or to the influence of his government. ¶ *Like rain upon the mown grass.* The word rendered *mown grass*—גֵּז, *gaiz*—means properly *a shearing*, and is applied in Deut. xviii. 4, and Job xxxi. 20, to a fleece of wool. So it is understood here by the Septuagint, by the Latin Vulgate, by the Syriac, and by Luther; and, in accordance with this, it has been supposed by some that there is an allusion to the dew that descended on the fleece spread out by Gideon, Judges vi. 37. The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it, "As the grass that has been eaten off by locusts;" where the idea would be that after locusts have passed over a field, devouring everything, when the rain descends the fields revive, and nature again puts on the appearance of life. This idea is adopted by

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace [1] so long as the moon endureth.

[1] *till* there be *no moon.*

8 He [e] shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

[e] 1 Kings iv. 20—24; Ps. lxxxix. 25; Zech. ix. 10.

Rosenmüller. The common interpretation, however, which refers the word to a *mowing*, that is, a *mown meadow*, is probably the correct one; and thus understood, the image is very beautiful. The reign of the Messiah would resemble the gently-descending shower, under which the grass which has been mown springs up again with freshness and beauty. ¶ *As showers* that *water the earth.* Literally, "like showers, the watering of the earth." The original word rendered "that water" suggests the idea of distilling, or *gently* flowing.

7. *In his days shall the righteous flourish.* It will be a period when just and upright men will be protected, or when they shall receive the countenance of him who reigns. The administration of the kingdom that is to be set up will be in favour of righteousness or justice. The word *flourish* here is derived from the growth of plants—as plants sprout, or spring up—an emblem of prosperity. ¶ *And abundance of peace.* Literally, "*multitude* of peace;" that is, The things which produce peace, or which indicate peace, will not be few, but numerous; they will abound everywhere. They will be found in towns and villages, and private dwellings; in the calm and just administration of the affairs of the State; in abundant harvests; in intelligence, in education, and in undisturbed industry; in the protection extended to the rights of all. ¶ *So long as the moon endureth.* Marg., as in Heb., *till there be no moon.* That is, till the moon shall cease to shine upon the earth. See ver. 5.

8. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea.* There is probably an allusion here to the promise in Ex. xxiii. 31: "And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river." This was the original promise in regard to the bounds of the promised land. A promise similar to this occurs also in Gen. xv. 18: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The meaning here is, that what was implied in these ancient promises would be carried out under the reign of the king referred to in the psalm. The *immediate* allusion, therefore, in the phrase "from sea to sea," may have been from the Red Sea on the East to the Mediterranean on the West; but still the language is susceptible of a more enlarged application, and may mean from one sea to another; that is, embracing all the lands or countries lying between seas and oceans; or, in other words, that the dominion would be universal. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 8. ¶ *And from the river,* etc. The Euphrates. This was emphatically "*the* river" to the Hebrews —the great river—the greatest river known to them; and this river would be naturally understood as intended by the expression, unless there was something to limit it. Besides, this was expressly designated in the original covenant as the boundary of the promised land. See, as above, Gen. xv. 18. The meaning here is, that, taking that river as one of the boundaries, or as a starting point, the dominion would extend from that to the utmost limits of the earth. It would have no other boundary but the limits of the world. The promise, therefore, is, that the dominion would be universal, or would pervade the earth;—at once a kingdom of peace, and yet spreading itself all over the

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him: and *f* his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The *g* kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

f Micah vii. 17

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down *h* before him; all nations shall serve him.

12 For he shall deliver *i* the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

g 2 Chron. ix. 21; Matt. ii. 11.
h Isa. xlix. 7. *i* Isa. xli. 17; Heb. vii. 25.

world. It is hardly necessary to say that this did not occur under Solomon, and that it could not have been expected that it would occur under him, and especially as it was expected that his reign would be one of peace and not of conquest. It would find its complete fulfilment only under the Messiah.

9. *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him.* The word rendered "they that dwell in the wilderness"—צִיִּים, *tziyyim* — means properly those who abide in deserts, dry places, solitudes; and it might be applied either to animals or to men. It is applied to the former in Isa. xiii. 21 (see Notes on that place); xxiii. 13; xxxiv. 14; Jer. l. 39. In all these, except Isa. xxiii. 13, it is rendered *wild beasts of the desert*, denoting jackals, ostriches, etc.; but here, and in Ps. lxxiv. 14, it is evidently applied to men, as denoting shepherds, — nomadic tribes, — men who have no permanent home, but who wander from place to place. The idea is, that these wild, wandering, unsettled hordes would become subject to him, or would bow down and acknowledge his authority. This can be fulfilled only under the Messiah. ¶ *And his enemies shall lick the dust.* This is expressive of the most thorough submission and abject humiliation. It is language derived from what seems actually to occur in Oriental countries, where men prostrate themselves on their faces, and place their mouths on the ground, in token of reverence or submission. Rosenmüller (Morgenland, vol. ii., pp. 82, 83) quotes a passage from Hugh Boyd's Account of his embassage to Candy in Ceylon, where he says that when he himself came to show respect to the king, it was by kneeling before him. But this, says he, was not the case with other ambassadors. "They almost literally *licked the dust.* They cast themselves on their faces on the stony ground, and stretched out their arms and legs; then they raised themselves upon their knees, and uttered certain forms of good wishes in the loudest tones,—May the head of the king of kings reach above the sun; may he reign a thousand years." Comp. Notes on Isa. xlix. 23.

10. *The kings of Tarshish.* On the situation of Tarshish, see Notes on Isa. ii. 16. Comp. Ps. xlviii. 7. The word seems to be used here to denote any distant region abounding with riches. ¶ *And of the isles,* etc. Representing also distant lands; or lands beyond the seas. The word *islands* among the Hebrews commonly denoted distant sea-coasts, particularly those of the Mediterranean. See Notes on Isa. xli. 1. ¶ *The kings of Sheba and Seba.* Places in Arabia. On the word *Sheba,* see Notes on Isa. lx. 6. On the word *Seba,* see Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. ¶ *Shall offer gifts.* See Notes on Ps. xlv. 12. Comp. Isa. lx. 5–7, 13–17.

11. *Yea, all kings shall fall down,* etc. That is, his reign will be universal. The kings and people mentioned in the previous verses are only *specimens* of what will occur. *All* kings—*all* nations—will do what these are represented as doing. They will submit to the Messiah; they will own him as their Lord. See Notes on Ps. ii. 8. Comp. Isa. xlix. 23.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

15 And he shall live, [k] and to him [1] shall be given of the gold of Sheba: [l] prayer also shall be made for him continually; *and* daily shall he be praised.[m]

k Rev. i. 18. [1] one *shall give.*
l 2 Chron. ix. 1. *m* Jude, ver. 25.

12. *For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth.* The sufferer; the down-trodden; the oppressed. See Notes on ver. 4. Comp. Notes on Isa. lxi. 1. ¶ *The poor also,* etc. All who have no protector; all who are exposed to injustice and wrong from others. This is everywhere declared to be the characteristic of the reign of the Messiah. See Notes on Isa. xi. 4.

13. *He shall spare the poor and needy.* He will have pity on; he will show mercy or favour to them. ¶ *And shall save the souls of the needy.* Will guard and defend them; will be their protector and friend. His administration will have special respect to those who are commonly overlooked, and who are exposed to oppression and wrong.

14. *He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence.* He will rescue their lives; that is, he will deliver them from the hands of men who practise deceit, or who are dishonest and unjust,—and from the hands of those who oppress. This is stating in another form the idea that his reign would be one of equity, protecting the rights of the poor, and delivering the oppressed. ¶ *And precious shall their blood be in his sight.* That is, so precious that he will not permit it to be shed unjustly, but will come to their rescue when their life is in danger; or, that—being shed—he will regard it as so valuable that he will not permit it to go unavenged. He will never be indifferent to their safety, or their reputation.

15. *And he shall live.* So far as the *language* here is concerned, this may either refer to the king—the Messiah,—or to the poor and the oppressed man. If the former, then it means that the life of the Messiah would be perpetual; that he would not be cut off as other sovereigns are; that there would be no change of dynasty; that he would be, as a king, the same—unchanging and unchanged—in all the generations of men, and in all the revolutions which occur on the earth. This would accord with the truth, and with what is elsewhere said of the Messiah; but, perhaps, the more correct interpretation is the latter,—that it refers to the poor and the oppressed man,—meaning that he would live to bring an offering to the Messiah, and to pray for the extension of his kingdom upon the earth. ¶ *And to him shall be given.* Marg., *one shall give.* Literally, *he shall give to him;* that is, the man who has enjoyed his protection, and who has been saved by him, will do this. As a token of his gratitude, and as an expression of his submission, he will bring to him a costly offering, the gold of Sheba. ¶ *Of the gold of Sheba.* One of the gifts referred to in ver. 10, as coming from Sheba. Comp. Isa. xliii. 3; xlv. 14. The meaning is, that those who are redeemed by him,—who owe so much to him for protecting and saving them—will bring the most valued things of the earth, or will consecrate to him all that they are, and all that they possess. Comp. Isa. lx. 5–7, 13–17. ¶ *Prayer also shall be made for him continually.* Not for him personally, but for the success of his reign; for the extension of his kingdom. Prayer made for *that* is made for *him,* for he is identified with that. ¶ And *daily shall he be praised.* Every day; constantly. It will not be only at stated and distant intervals—at set seasons, and on

16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:

special occasions,—but those who love him will do it every day. It is not necessary to say that this accords with the truth in reference to those who are the friends and followers of the Messiah—the Lord Jesus. Their lives are lives of praise and gratitude. From their dwellings daily praise ascends to him; from their hearts praise is constant;—praise uttered in the closet and in the family; praise breathed forth from the heart, whether on the farm, in the workshop, on a journey, or in the busy marts of commerce. The time will come when this shall be universal; when he who can take in at a glance the condition of the world, will see it to be a world of praise; when he who looks on all hearts at the same moment will see a world full of thankfulness.

16. *There shall be an handful of corn.* Of *grain*,—for so the word means in the Scriptures. The *general* idea in this verse is plain. It is, that, in the time of the Messiah, there would be an ample supply of the fruits of the earth; or that his reign would tend to the promotion of prosperity, industry, abundance. It would be as if fields of grain waved everywhere, even on the tops of mountains, or as if the hills were cultivated to the very summit, so that the whole land would be covered over with waving, smiling harvests. There is a difference of opinion, however, and consequently of interpretation, as to the meaning of the word rendered *handful*. This word—פִּסָּה, *pissah*—occurs nowhere else, and it is impossible, therefore, to determine its exact meaning. By some it is rendered *handful;* by others, *abundance*. The former interpretation is adopted by Prof. Alexander, and is found in the older interpreters generally; the latter is the opinion of Gesenius, De Wette, and most modern expositors. It is also the interpretation in the Syriac. The Vulgate and the LXX. render it *strength*—meaning something *firm* or *secure*,—*firmamentum*, στήριγμα. According to the explanation which regards the word as meaning *handful*, the idea is, that there would be a great contrast between the small beginnings of the Messiah's reign and its ultimate triumph—as if a mere handful of grain were sown on the top of a mountain,—on a place little likely to produce anything—a place usually barren and unproductive, — which would grow into an abundant harvest, so that it would wave everywhere like the cedar trees of Lebanon. According to the other interpretation, the idea is simply that there would be an *abundance* in the land. The whole land would be cultivated, even to the tops of the hills, and the evidences of plenty would be seen everywhere. It is impossible to determine which of these is the correct idea; but both agree in that which is essential — that the reign of the Messiah would be one of peace and plenty. The former interpretation is the most poetic, and the most beautiful. It accords, also, with other representations — as in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and the parable of the leaven; and it accords, also, with the fact that the beginning of the Gospel was small in comparison with what would be the ultimate result. This would seem to render that interpretation the most probable. ¶ *In the earth.* In the land; the land of Canaan; the place where the kingdom of the Messiah would be set up. ¶ *Upon the top of the mountains.* In places *like* the tops of mountains. The mountains and hills were seldom cultivated to the tops. Yet here the idea is, that the state of things under the Messiah would be *as if* a handful of grain were sown in the place most unlikely to produce a harvest, or which no one thought of cultivating. No one needs to be told how well this would represent the cold and barren human heart in

and [n] *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

17 His name shall [1] endure for ever; his name shall be [2] continued as long as the sun; and *men* shall be blessed [o] in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only [p] doeth wondrous things.

19 And blessed [q] *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole

n Hos. xiv. 5—7.
1 *be.*
2 *as a son to continue his father's name for ever.*
o Eph. i. 3.
p Ex. xv. 11.
q Rev. v. 13.

general; or the state of the Jewish world in respect to true religion, at the time when the Saviour appeared. ¶ *The fruit thereof.* That which would spring up from the mere handful of grain thus sown. ¶ *Shall shake like Lebanon.* Like the cedar-trees of Lebanon. The harvest will wave as those tall and stately trees do. This is an image designed to show that the growth would be strong and abundant, far beyond what could have been anticipated from the small quantity of the seed sown, and the barrenness of the soil. The word rendered *shake* means more than is implied in our word *shake* or *wave.* It conveys also the idea of a rushing sound, such as that which whistles among cedar or pine trees. "The origin of the Hebrew verb," says Gesenius, "and its primary idea lies in the *noise* and *crashing* which is made by concussion." Hence it is used to denote the *rustling* motion of grain waving in the wind, and the sound of the wind whistling through trees when they are agitated by it. ¶ *And* they *of the city.* Most interpreters suppose that this refers to Jerusalem, as the centre of the Messiah's kingdom. It seems more probable, however, that it is not designed to refer to Jerusalem, or to any particular city, but to stand in contrast with the top of the mountain. Cities and hills would alike flourish; there would be prosperity everywhere—in barren and unpopulated wastes, and in places where men had been congregated together. The *figure* is changed, as is not uncommon, but the *idea* is retained. The indications of prosperity would be apparent everywhere. ¶ *Shall flourish like grass of the earth.* As grass springs out of the ground, producing the idea of beauty and plenty. See Notes on Isa. xliv. 3, 4.

17. *His name shall endure for ever.* Marg., as in Heb., *Shall be for ever;* that is, *He* shall endure for ever. ¶ *His name shall be continued as long as the sun.* As long as that continues to shine — an expression designed to express perpetuity. See Notes on ver. 5. The margin here is, *shall be as a son to continue his father's name for ever.* The Hebrew word — יִנּוֹן, *nun* — means *to sprout, to put forth;* and hence, to *flourish.* The idea is that of a tree which continues always to sprout, or put forth leaves, branches, blossoms;—or, which never dies. ¶ *And* men *shall be blessed in him.* See Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18. He will be a source of blessing to them, in the pardon of sin; in happiness; in peace; in salvation. ¶ *All nations shall call him blessed.* Shall praise him; shall speak of him as the source of their highest comforts, joys, and hopes. See Luke xix. 38; Matt. xxi. 9; xxiii. 39. The time will come when all the nations of the earth will honour and praise him.

18. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *God, the God of Israel.* The God who rules over Israel; the God who is worshipped by the Hebrew people, and who is recognised as their God. They adore him as the true God; and he *is* their God, their Protector, their Friend. ¶ *Who only doeth wondrous things.* Things that can properly be regarded as *wonders;* things fitted to excite admiration by their vastness and power. Comp. Ex. xv. 11.

19. *And blessed* be *his glorious name for ever.* The name by which

earth be filled [r] *with* his glory. Amen, and amen.

[r] Num. xiv. 21; Hab. ii. 14.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

he is known,—referring perhaps particularly to his name *Jehovah.* Still the prayer would be, that all the names by which he is known, all by which he has revealed himself, might be regarded with veneration always and everywhere. ¶ *And let the whole earth be filled* with *his glory.* With the knowledge of himself; with the manifestations of his presence; with the influences of his religion. Comp. Num. xiv. 21. This prayer was peculiarly appropriate at the close of a psalm designed to celebrate the glorious reign of the Messiah. Under that reign the earth will be, in fact, filled with the glory of God; the world will be a world of glory. Assuredly all who love God, and who love mankind, all who desire that God may be honoured, and that the world may be blessed and happy, will unite in this fervent prayer, and re-echo the hearty "Amen and amen" of the psalmist. ¶ *Amen, and amen.* So be it. Let this occur. Let this time come. The expression is doubled to denote intensity of feeling. It is the going out of a heart full of desire that this might be so.

20. *The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.* This is not found in the Syriac. The following is added in that version at the close of the psalm:—"The end of the Second Book." In regard to this twentieth verse, it is quite clear that it is no part of the psalm; and it is every way probable that it was not placed here by the author of the psalm, and also that it has no special and exclusive reference to *this* psalm, for the psalm could in no special sense be called "a prayer of David." The words bear all the marks of having been placed at the close of a collection of psalms, or a division of the Book of Psalms, to which might be given as an appropriate designation, the title "The Prayers of David, the son of Jesse;" meaning that that book, or that division of the book, was made up of the compositions of David, and might be thus distinguished from other portions of the general collection. This would not imply that in this part of the collection there were literally no other psalms than those which had been composed by David, or that none of the psalms of David might be found in other parts of the general collection, but that this division was more entirely made up of his psalms, and that the name might therefore be given to this as *his collection.* It may be fairly inferred from this, that there *was* such a collection, or that there *were,* in the Book of Psalms, divisions which were early recognised. See the General Introduction. Bishop Horsley supposes, however, that this declaration, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," pertains to this psalm alone, as if David had nothing more to pray for or to wish than what was expressed in these glowing representations of the kingdom of the Messiah, and of the happy times which would be enjoyed under his rule.

PSALM LXXIII.

This psalm (with the ten succeeding psalms, together with Psalm l.,—twelve in all) is ascribed to Asaph, unless the reading in the margin, "*for* Asaph" be correct. The most natural sense of the expression in the title, however, is that they are psalms *of* Asaph; that is, that they were composed by him. See Introd. to Ps. l. It has been maintained that a part of these psalms, particularly Ps. lxxiv., lxxix., and lxxx., could not be his, for it is alleged that they refer to events long subsequent to his age. There seems to be no objection, however, to the supposition that *this* psalm was composed by him, as it has no particular reference to any particular age or country, but is made up of general reflections, which might have arisen in any age, or in any land.

Respecting the particular occasion on which the psalm was composed we have

no information. It was in view of the prosperity of the wicked, and suggests the reflections which troubled the writer in regard to the Divine administration in view of that prosperity. The thoughts which are recorded are such as might occur to any mind, and do often occur, arising from the fact that wicked men are so successful and so happy in the world, living in prosperity, and dying apparently without pain or alarm, while so many of the good are poor and sorrowful in their lives, and their whole course on earth is one of so much grief and sorrow. Such thoughts as are expressed in this psalm *will* often cross the mind, and the question *will* arise why God permits this; whether there is any advantage in being good; and whether that God who sees this, and permits this, *can* be just and benevolent, —the friend of the righteous, and the enemy of the wicked,—or whether there *is* any God. The psalm describes these feelings, and shows how the difficulties were solved in the case of its author, suggesting as the solution, that this is not the world of retribution; that there is a future state where exact justice will be done, and where all the inequalities of the present system will be adjusted. *In* that future world—*in eternity*—there will be ample time and room to make such an adjustment; to do exact justice to all. The *idea* in the psalm is, that these things cannot be explained except on the supposition that there is a future state; and the psalm, therefore, is an argument *for* a future state of existence. The affairs of earth cannot be explained, and the character of God cannot be vindicated, except on that supposition.

The psalm in its general structure and design bears a strong resemblance to Ps. xxxvii., though there is no evidence that the author of this psalm had that before him, or in his eye. The *expressions* are not the same, nor does one appear to have been copied from the other. They contain independent reflections on the same general subject, suggesting the same perplexities, and finding a solution of the difficulties in the same way,—in looking to the future, to a just retribution in the end. In this case — Ps. lxxiii. — the psalmist says that he learned the solution of the problem by the instructions of the sanctuary (ver. 17); in the former case — Ps. xxxvii.,—the solution was found by an observation of the comparative effects of a wicked and a religious life, Ps. xxxvii. 10, 11, 20, 23-25, 35-37. The idea in both is, that the ultimate effect of goodness or piety must be happiness; the ultimate effect of sin must be misery. The author of one of these psalms finds this solution in the present life; the author of the other, in the life to come. In either case, the character of God is vindicated, and the troubled feelings of the soul calmed down.

The general *idea* in the psalm is stated in the first verse, that "God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart;" that is, that he is the true friend of the righteous, or that his administration is in favour of virtue, or in favour of those who are righteous. The psalm states the process by which the writer came to this conclusion; the mental conflicts through which he passed before this result was reached; his own agitation of mind, and the difficulties he saw in the subject, in view of the facts which exist in this world. His mind had been greatly perplexed when he had meditated on the subject, and the mental conflict had gone so far with him as almost to lead him to abandon the idea that there was a God, or that there was anything in religion, and to conclude that it was all a delusion.

The psalm, therefore, consists of the following parts:—

I. The statement of the general proposition that the Divine administration *is* favourable to virtue, or that there *is* a God who presides in the affairs of men, ver. 1.

II. The facts which the psalmist had observed, out of which his doubts had sprung, or which had given him so much perplexity and trouble, vers. 2-14. Those facts were, that the wicked seemed to be prosperous and happy; that they lived without trouble, and died without any tokens of the Divine disapproval; that their eyes stood out with fatness, and that they had more than heart could desire; that they set their mouths against the heavens, and were proud blasphemers, while God took no notice of them, or manifested no disapprobation; that they contemned God, and yet were prospered in the world, while, on the other hand, he himself—the psalmist—was chastened, and afflicted, and plagued,—suggesting the idea that there could be no advantage in piety, and that all his anxiety to have pure hands and a pure heart was in vain.

III. The statement of his purpose to conceal his feelings on the subject, lest

PSALM LXXIII.

A Psalm [1] of Asaph.

TRULY [2] God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are [3] of a clean heart.

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped.

[1] Or, *for.* [2] Or, *Yet.* [3] *clean of heart.*

he should do injury to those who had *not* these troublesome thoughts, but who endeavoured in humility to serve God, ver. 15. He had thoughts which he did not consider it proper to make known to others, — thoughts which would only pain them, or unsettle their faith in God, without doing any good.

IV. The means by which his mind had been made calm on the subject, and his difficulties solved, vers. 17–20. He had gone to the sanctuary; he had looked at the end of these things; he had seen what was to be the result; he had been instructed to look forward to a time when all these inequalities would be adjusted, and when, in the punishment of the wicked, it would be seen that there is a God, and that he is just.

V. He now condemns his own former folly, and sees that his conduct had been wholly irrational; that his views had been short-sighted; that he had been stupid, like a beast, in the low conceptions which he had taken of God, vers. 21, 22.

VI. In view of all, the psalmist now commits himself to God. He sees that there is reason to trust in him. He resolves to murmur or complain no more. He finds his portion in God. He believes that God will guide him by his counsel, and ultimately receive him to glory. He says that there is none in heaven or on earth that he desires beside him. He is cheered with the thought that when his strength and heart should fail, God would be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. He would, therefore, henceforth, confide in the Lord God, vers. 23–28.

1. *Truly God* is *good to Israel.* That is, to his people; to the righteous; to those who serve him. That is, God is the *real* friend of the righteous. He has not forgotten them. He does not abandon them. He is not indifferent to them. He is *not* the friend of wicked men; and the administration of his government is *not* in favour of wickedness. After all that *seems* to indicate this, after all that troubles the mind in regard to his dealings, it is a truth that God *is* the friend of righteousness, and not of wickedness, and that there *is* advantage in his service. To see the force of what is said here by the psalmist we must realize that the train of thought in the psalm *had* passed through his mind, and that his perplexities had been relieved in the manner specified in the psalm. The margin here is *"yet;"—yet God is good to Israel.* This word *yet* would, in this place, be a happy translation. The psalmist then would be represented as having been engaged in meditating on the subject and in looking at all its perplexities, and then he says, "*Yet* God *is* good; notwithstanding all the difficulties in the case, it is nevertheless true that he *is* the friend of his people—the friend of righteousness." ¶ Even *to such as are of a clean heart.* Marg., as in Heb., *clean of heart.* See ver. 13. The reference is to those who are truly righteous, for all true righteousness has its seat in the heart. See Ps. li. 10.

2. *But as for me.* Literally, *And I.* The meaning is, "And I, who so confidently now trust in God, and believe that he is good, was formerly in a far different state of mind; I was so hesitating, so troubled, and so doubtful, that I had almost entirely lost confidence in him as a wise and just moral governor." ¶ *My feet were almost gone.* I was just ready to fall. Of course, this refers to his state of mind. In regard to his faith or confidence in God, he was like a man standing in a slippery place, and scarcely able to remain upright. ¶ *My steps had well nigh slipped.* The expression rendered *well nigh* means

3 For I was envious [s] at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 For *there are* no bands in their death; but their strength *is* [1] firm.

[s] Ps. xxxvii. 1; James iv. 5. [1] *fat.*

5 They *are* not in [2] trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued [3] like *other* men.

6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment.[t]

[2] *the trouble of.* [3] *with.* [t] Ps. cix. 18.

like nothing, or *as nothing;* that is, in reference to firmness it was as if there was *nothing* left. There was nothing which would keep him from slipping. The word rendered *slipped* means *poured out.* That is, in his going he was like water poured out, instead of being like something solid and firm. The idea is, that his faith seemed to be all gone. He was like a falling man; a man who had no strength to walk.

3. *For I was envious at the foolish.* The word *foolish* here refers to sinners. It may either refer to them *as* foolish, or as proud, insolent, vain,—for so the word is elsewhere used. See Ps. xiv. 1. ¶ When *I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* More literally, "the *peace* of the wicked." The reference is not so much to their *prosperity* in general as to their *peace;* their conscious safety; their freedom from trouble; and especially their calmness, and their freedom from suffering, in death. From all this he was led for the moment to doubt whether there was any advantage in religion; whether God was just; and whether he befriended the righteous any more than he did the wicked.

4. *For* there are *no bands in their death.* The word rendered *bands* here means properly *cords tightly drawn,* Isa. lviii. 6; then, pains, pangs, torments—*as if* one were twisted or tortured with pain, as a cord is closely twisted. The word occurs only in Isa. lviii. 6, and in this place. The fact which is here referred to by the psalmist, and which gave him so much uneasiness, was that which so often occurs, that when the wicked die, they do not seem to suffer in proportion to their wickedness; or there seem to be no especial marks of the Divine displeasure as they are about to leave the world. They have lived in prosperity, and they die in peace. There is no uncommon agony in death; there is no special alarm about the future world. They have enjoyed this world, and a sinful life seems now to be followed by a peaceful death. They do not even suffer as much in death as good men often do;—what then is the advantage of piety? And how can we believe that God is just; or that he is the friend of the righteous; or even that there *is* a God? Of the *fact* here adverted to by the psalmist, that the wicked do thus live and die, there can be no doubt, and that fact has given perplexity to good men in all ages of the world. ¶ *But their strength* is *firm.* Marg., as in Heb., *fat.* That is, They are not emaciated and weakened by disease, but they go down to death apparently from good health, and without wasting disease. See Notes on Job xxi. 23–26.

5. *They* are *not in trouble* as other *men.* Marg., *In the trouble of other men.* Literally, "In the labour of man they are not;" that is, they are exempt from the common burdens and troubles of humanity, or those which pertain to man as man. There seems to be some special interposition in their favour to save them from the common calamities which come upon the race. ¶ *Neither are they plagued like* other *men.* Marg., *with.* Literally, "And with mankind they are not afflicted," or smitten. The calamities which come so thickly and heavily on the race do not seem to come upon them. They are favoured, prospered, happy, while others are afflicted.

6. *Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain.* Therefore they are

7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they [1] have more than heart could wish.

8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression:

[1] *pass the thoughts of the heart.*

they speak [u] loftily.

9 They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth.

10 Therefore his people return

[u] Jude, ver. 16.

proud, haughty, imperious. They put on the ornaments and trappings of pride; their clothing and their adorning all are indicative of a proud heart. They seem to imagine that they are better than others, and that they are treated in this manner *because* they are better than others. In the original it is a single word which is rendered "compasseth about as a chain." The word means *to adorn with a necklace or collar;* and the idea is, that pride surrounds them as with a neck-chain, or a collar for the neck. They wear it as an ornament. They make it conspicuous. It is apparent on a haughty neck,—in an erect and stiff demeanour. Comp. Notes on Isa. iii. 16: "The daughters of Zion walk with stretched forth necks." ¶ *Violence covereth them* as *a garment.* Injustice or cruelty seems to be their very clothing. It is manifest in their whole gait and demeanour that they are men of haughtiness and pride; that they are destitute of tenderness, sympathy, sensibility.

7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness.* As the fruit of their high living. They are not weakened and emaciated by toil and want, as other men often are. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 10. ¶ *They have more than heart could wish.* Marg., *they pass the thoughts of the heart.* Literally, "the imaginations [or thoughts] of the heart pass;" pass along; pass forth. The meaning seems to be, not that they have more than heart could desire, as in our translation,—for that would not probably be true; nor, that the thoughts of the heart are *disclosed,* as Prof. Alexander supposes,—for that idea does not seem to be in the language; but that their thoughts, their plans, their purposes, *pass freely along* without any obstruction; their wishes are all gratified; their purposes are accomplished; they have all that they wish. Whatever comes into the mind as an object of desire is obtained without hindrance or trouble. They seem only to *wish* for a thing, or to *think* of a thing, and they have it.

8. *They are corrupt.* Literally, *they mock.* The word rendered "they are corrupt" never has this signification. It is the very word—מוּק, *muk*—from which our word *mock* is derived, and means the same thing. The idea is that they deride religion, or *mock* at all that pertains to God, and to the retributions of the future world. ¶ *And speak wickedly* concerning *oppression,* etc. Literally, "they speak in wickedness; oppression they speak from on high." That is, they use arrogant language; they speak in a proud manner, as if they were *above* others; they use harsh and violent language, not regarding the feelings or the rights of others.

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens.* Comp. Rev. xiii. 6. Literally, "They set their mouth *in* heaven," or in the heavens. The idea is, they speak as if they were *in* the heavens; as if they were clothed with all authority; as if they were superior beings, and had a right to command the universe. ¶ *And their tongue walketh through the earth.* It has no limit; it is *as if* it roamed over all the earth. They speak without any restraint of law, or propriety; without any regard to the command of God, or to what is due to men. In other words, they seem to set themselves above all law, and to act as if there were no one in heaven or in earth to control them.

10. *Therefore his people.* Those

hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.

11 And they say, How [v] doth

[v] Job xxii. 13; Ps. xciv. 7.

God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?

12 Behold, these *are* the un-

that truly love God; the pious in the earth. ¶ *Return hither.* Return to this subject. In their musings—their meditations on Divine things—they come back to this inquiry. The subject occupies their minds, and they recur to it as a subject which perplexes them; as a thing that is incomprehensible. They think it over again and again, and are more and more perplexed and embarrassed. The difficulties which these facts suggest about God and his government are such that they cannot solve them. ¶ *And waters of a full* cup *are wrung out to them.* Literally, *waters of fulness;* or, full waters. The Chaldee renders this, *Many tears flow from them.* The LXX., and the Latin Vulgate, "And full days shall be found by them." The word rendered *are wrung out*—from מָצָה, *matzah*—means properly to *suck;* then, to suck out; to drink greedily. See Isa. li. 17. It is applied to one who drinks greedily of an intoxicating cup; and then, to one who drinks a cup of poison to the dregs. Ps. lxxv. 8. The meaning here is, that the facts in the case, and the questions which arose in regard to those facts, and which so perplexed them, were like a bitter cup; a cup of poison, or an intoxicating cup which overpowered their faculties,—and that they, in their perplexities, *exhausted* the cup. They drank it all, even to the dregs. They did not merely *taste it;* but they *drank* it. It was a subject *full* of perplexity; a subject that *wholly* overpowered all their faculties, and *exhausted* all their powers.

11. *And they say.* His people say. The connexion demands this interpretation. The meaning is, that his people, as they return again and again to this subject (ver. 10), are constrained to put this question. They are compelled by these facts to start such painful inquiries about God; and distressing as the inquiries are, and as are the doubts which they involve, these thoughts *will* pass through their mind, even though to avoid giving needless pain to those who have no such perplexities and difficulties they keep these thoughts to themselves, ver. 15. ¶ *How doth God know?* That is, How can these facts be reconciled with God's omniscience? How *can* it be that he sees all this, and yet suffers it to occur, or that he does not interpose to prevent it? Is it not a fair inference from these facts that God does *not* see them, and that he is *not* an Omniscient Being? Can it be explained, can it be believed, that God sees all this, and that he calmly looks on, and does nothing to prevent it? If he sees it, why does he not interpose and put an end to it? These perplexities were not confined to the psalmist. They are such as have been felt by good men in all ages; and no one yet has been able to furnish a solution of them that is wholly free from difficulty. ¶ *And is there knowledge in the Most High? Can* there be in God a knowledge of these facts? Are we not driven to the conclusion that he *must* be ignorant of them? for, if he knew them, would he not interpose to prevent them? How *can* it be consistent with the idea that he *knows* them, and *sees* them, that he does *not* interpose, and that he suffers these things to take place without any attempt to check such evils? Who, even now, can answer these questions?

12. *Behold, these* are *the ungodly, who prosper in the world.* This is also to be understood as the language of the good man perplexed and embarrassed by the fact that the wicked are prosperous and happy. The meaning is, "Lo, these are wicked men—men of undoubted depravity;

godly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.

13 Verily [w] I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and [1] chastened every morning.

15 If I say, I will speak thus;

[w] Job ix. 27—31. [1] *my chastisement* was.

they are men who live regardless of God; and yet they are peaceful, tranquil, happy, prospered." This was one of the facts which so much embarrassed the psalmist. If there had been any doubt about the *character* of those men, the case would have been different. But there was none. They were men whose character for wickedness was well known, and yet they were permitted to live in peace and prosperity, *as if* they were the favourites of heaven. The literal meaning of the words rendered "who prosper in the world" is, "tranquil [or secure] for the age;" that is, for ever, or constantly. They know no changes; they see no reverses; they are the same through life. They are always tranquil, calm, happy, successful. ¶ *They increase* in *riches.* Literally, "They become great in substance." They make constant accumulations in wealth, until they become great.

13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart* in *vain.* That is, There is no advantage in all my efforts to become pure and holy. It does not assist me in obtaining the favour of God; and it would be just as well to live a sinful life,—to indulge in the pleasures of sense,—to make the world my portion. Nothing is to be gained by all my painful efforts at self-discipline; by all my endeavours to become righteous. It would have been as well for me—or better—if I had lived a life of sin like other men. The righteous obtain from God fewer blessings than the wicked; they have less happiness and less prosperity in this world; they are subjected to more trouble and sorrow;—and to all else there must be added the struggles, the conflict, the warfare, the painful effort *to be* pure, and to lead a holy life, all of which is now seen to be of no advantage whatever. Such thoughts as these were not confined to the psalmist. They are thoughts which *will* start up in the mind, and which it is not easy to calm down. ¶ *And washed my hands in innocency.* That is, It has been of no use that I have washed my hands in innocency. The word *innocency* here means *purity.* He had washed his hands in that which was pure; as, pure water. To wash the hands is emblematic of innocence or purity. See Notes on Ps. xxvi. 6.

14. *For all the day long.* Continually. All my life. ¶ *Have I been plagued.* Smitten; afflicted; troubled. My life has been a life of trial. I have not known prosperity. ¶ *And chastened every morning.* Marg., as in Heb., *My chastisement was.* That is, my sufferings—my trials—have been repeated with every returning morning. Each new day has brought some new form of affliction, designed to rebuke and punish me. I never have found exemption from trial even for a single day. So different is my lot from the lot of wicked men, who know nothing of this, and who are always prospered and happy. See Notes on Job vii. 18.

15. *If I say, I will speak thus.* If I should resolve to give expression to my feelings. If I should utter all that is passing in my mind and my heart. It is implied here that he had *not* given utterance to these thoughts, but had confined them to his own bosom. He knew how they might be regarded by others; how others might be led to feel as if no confidence was to be placed in God; how this might suggest thoughts to them which would not otherwise occur to them, and which would only tend to fill their minds with distress; how such thoughts might unsettle the foundations of their faith, their peace, their hope,

behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.
16 When I thought to know this, it *was* [1] too painful for me;
17 Until I went into the sanc-

[1] *labour in mine eyes.*

and their joy. ¶ *I should offend* against *the generation of thy children.* The word rendered "I should offend," means to treat perfidiously, or in a faithless or treacherous manner. Then it means, *to deal falsely with.* And this is the meaning here;—"I should not be *true* to them; I should not be *faithful* to their real interests; I should do that which would be equivalent to dealing with them in a false and perfidious manner." The idea is, that he *ought* not to say or do anything which would tend to lessen their confidence in God, or which would suggest to their minds grounds of distrust in God, or which would disturb their peace and hope. This was alike an act of justice and benevolence on his part. Whatever might be his own troubles and doubts, he had no *right* to fill their minds with doubts and distrust of God; and he felt that, as it was desirable that the minds of others should not be harassed as his own had been, it could not be *kind* to suggest such thoughts. This, however, should not forbid any one from mentioning such difficulties to another for the purpose of having them removed. *If* they occur to the mind, as they may to the minds of any, however sincere and pious they may be, nothing can make it improper that they should be laid before one of greater age, or longer experience, or wider opportunities of knowledge, in order that the difficulties may be solved. Nothing can make it improper for a child to have recourse thus to a parent,—or a member of a church, to a pastor. If, however, these doubts can be calmed down otherwise, it is better that they should be mentioned to no one. Some little additional strength may be given them even by dwelling on them long enough to mention them to another, and by putting them in such a form that they would be understood by another; and the true way is to go to God with them by prayer, and to spread them out before the mercy seat. Prayer, and a careful study of the word of God *may* calm them down without their being suggested to any human being. At any rate, they *should not* be suggested at all to the young, or to those with fewer advantages of education, or of less experience than we have had, on whom the only effect would be to fill their minds with doubts which they could not solve,—and with thoughts tending only to perplexity and unbelief,—such as would never have occurred to themselves.

16. *When I thought to know this.* When I endeavoured to comprehend this, or to explain it to myself. The idea is that he *thought* on the subject, or *meditated* on it with a view to be able to understand it. He did not express his opinions and feelings to others, but he dwelt on them in his own mind;—not to find additional difficulties, not to confirm himself in opposition to God, and not to find new occasions for distrusting the Divine government, but to understand exactly *how this was.* It was his object to seek and understand *the truth.* ¶ *It* was *too painful for me.* Marg., *It was labour in mine eyes.* The Hebrew word rendered *painful,* means properly labour, toil, a burden; and the idea is, that the question was a burden—was too weighty for his weak powers.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God.* The word *sanctuary* we now apply to a place of public worship; and, thus understood, the passage here would mean that he learned the truth on the subject only by the statements and disclosures made there in regard to the Divine plans and dealings, and the results of human conduct. This interpretation makes good sense, and is in itself true, but it is not the idea

tuary of God; *then* understood I their end.[x]

18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

x Ps. xxxvii. 38.

in the original. The word *sanctuary* in the Old Testament, in the singular number, is applied to the tabernacle, or the temple, or, more especially to the most holy place *in* the tabernacle or the temple; the place of the peculiar dwelling of God. Thus understood, the idea would be that he learned the solution of the mystery *there*. But these were not places of *instruction*, and it cannot be supposed that the reference is to either of them. The word in the original is in the plural number—*sanctuaries*,—things that God regarded as holy; and the meaning seems to be, that the only solution of the case was to be learned from those things which pertained to God's most holy and secret places; or in those places which were nearest to him, and where he most clearly manifested himself. The difficulty was not to be solved by any mere human reasoning—by the powers of man, away from God; it was to be learned in the presence of God himself, and in the disclosures which He made about his Divine plans and purposes. The psalmist had tried his own powers of reason, and the subject was above his reach. The only solution of the difficulty was to be obtained by a near approach to God himself. There the mystery *could* be solved, and there it *was* solved. The "end" of all this, as disclosed by God, would determine *why* it was permitted, and would remove the perplexity of the mind. ¶ Then *understood I their end*. Literally, *their after things*; that is, the things which will occur to them hereafter. That solves all the difficulty. There will be a judgment hereafter, and dark as things may now appear, it will be seen in the end, or in the result, that exact and equal justice will be done to all.

18. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places*. Not in a solid and permanent position; not where their foothold would be secure, but as on smooth and slippery rocks, where they would be liable any moment to fall into the foaming billows. However prosperous their condition may seem to be now, yet it is a condition of uncertainty and danger, from which they must soon fall into ruin. In their prosperity there is nothing of permanence or stability; and this fact will explain the difficulty. ¶ *Thou castedst them down into destruction*. They are placed, not in a permanent condition, but in a condition from which they will be cast down to destruction. Ruin is before them; and the end will demonstrate the justice of God. Nothing can be determined from their present condition as to the question which caused so much perplexity, but in order to a proper solution we must wait to see the end. As an illustration of this, see the interesting account of the interview between Solon of Athens, and Crœsus, the rich king of Lydia, as given in Herodotus, book i., 30–33.

19. *How are they* brought *into desolation, as in a moment!* How suddenly and unexpectedly does destruction come upon them! Nothing can be argued from their apparent prosperity, for there is no ground of security in *that*, — no basis for an argument that it will continue. The *end* must be seen in order to form a correct estimate on the subject, and that end may soon come. Comp. Notes on Job xv. 20, 21. ¶ *They are utterly consumed with terrors*. Literally, "they perish; they are destroyed by terrors;" that is, by *terrible things*, or by things fitted to produce terror in the mind. The idea is not that they are destroyed by their own fears, but that things come

20 As a dream *y* when *one* awaketh; *so,* O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

y Isa. xxix. 7, 8. [1] *I knew not.* [2] *with.*

21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

22 So foolish *was* I, and [1] ignorant; I was *as* a beast [2] before thee.

upon them which are fitted to overwhelm the soul, and that by those things they are utterly destroyed. It is by this *result* that we are to determine in regard to the equity of the Divine administration, and not by their prosperity and their apparent safety.

20. *As a dream when* one *awaketh.* Their prosperity is like the visions of a dream; the reality is seen when one awakes. A man in a dream may imagine that he is a king; that he dwells in a palace; that he is surrounded by flatterers and courtiers; that he walks in pleasant groves, listens to the sounds of sweet music, sits down at a table loaded with the luxuries of all climes, and lies upon a bed of down. He may awake only to find that he is encompassed with poverty, or that he is on a bed of languishing, or that he is the miserable tenant of a hovel or a dungeon. The reality is when he awakes. So it is in regard to our present condition on earth. The reality is seen when the dream—the gorgeous dream—of life is over. ¶ So, *O Lord, when thou awakest.* The Hebrew expression here—בְּעִיר *bâ-ir*—occurs in more than fifty other places in the Scriptures, and is in all these places translated *in the city.* This interpretation, however, would be quite unmeaning here, and the probability is that the expression is a form of the verb עוּר, *ur, to awake, to arouse;* and the idea is not, as in our version, that of *God's* awaking as if *he* had been asleep, but it refers to the dreamer when *he* shall awake. It is, literally, *in the awaking;* that is, when the dream is over. ¶ *Thou shalt despise their image.* The image that floated before their imaginations in the dream of life. Thou wilt pay no attention to it; there is no reality in it; it will at once vanish. In the future world, God will pay no regard to the dreams of human life, to the outward show, to the appearance; but the affairs of eternity will be regulated by what is real—by that which constitutes the character of the man. By that, and not by the vain dreams of the world, will the destiny of men be determined. We are to look at *that* in determining the question about the government of God, and not at what *appears* in the brief dream of life.

21. *Thus my heart was grieved.* Literally, and more expressively, *was soured.* The meaning is, that his heart was grieved, pained, dissatisfied. His mind was embittered, and he was rendered unhappy, by the views which he cherished about God, as doubting the wisdom and justice of his dealings with men—and about men, as being envious at their prosperity. ¶ *And I was pricked in my reins.* The reins are often in the Scriptures represented as the seat of the thoughts or affections. See Notes on Ps. vii. 9. The word rendered *pricked* means to sharpen, as a sword; and then, to pierce and penetrate as a sword does. The idea is, that these thoughts, so distressing and painful, seemed to be like a sharp sword penetrating to the seat of life.

22. *So foolish* was *I, and ignorant.* Such low and imperfect views did I take of the subject. The margin is, *I knew not.* So the Hebrew: "And I am brutish, and know not;" that is, I did not understand the case; I had no correct views in regard to it. ¶ *I was* as *a beast before thee.* Marg., as in Heb., *with thee.* That is, in thy very presence; or, I was guilty of such foolishness in the very presence of my Maker. If it had been when I was alone, or when no one saw me, the folly would not have been so aggra-

23 Nevertheless, I *am* continually with thee; thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.

24 Thou [z] shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the [1] strength of

[z] Ps. xlviii. 14. [1] *rock.*

vated, and so much to be regretted, but it was when the very eye of God was upon me. Comp. Isa. i. 7; Jer. vii. 30; xviii. 10; Ps. li. 4. When he says that he was as a beast, he means that he was stupid and senseless; he had no proper understanding of the case; he did not take any just views of it.

23. *Nevertheless, I* am *continually with thee.* I am kept by thee in the land of the living; I am permitted to abide in thy presence; I am allowed to hope in thy mercy. Notwithstanding my low and unworthy views, notwithstanding my doubts about the justice of the Divine administration, notwithstanding my envy at the prosperity of the wicked, and my spirit of complaining against God, I am not driven away from God; I am not banished from his presence, or cut off from his favour. Well may we marvel when we reflect on our thoughts about God, that He has not risen in his anger, and banished us from his presence for ever and ever. ¶ *Thou hast holden* me *by my right hand.* Thou hast not left me. Thou hast stretched out thy hand to keep me. Thou hast been to me as a Protector and Friend. Thou hast not been angry at my unkind and ungrateful thoughts; thou hast not banished me eternally from thy presence.

24. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.* With thy advice; with thy teaching. This implies two things: (*a*) his belief that God *would* do this, notwithstanding his folly; and (*b*) his purpose that God *should* be his guide now. He would no longer murmur or complain, but would entrust all to God, and allow himself to be led as God should be pleased to direct him. ¶ *And afterward receive me* to *glory.* After thou hast led me along the path of the present life in the way in which thou wouldst have me to go, thou wilt then receive me to thyself in heaven—to a world where all shall be clear; where I shall never have any doubts in regard to thy being, to the justice of thy dispensations, or to the principles of thy government.

25. *Whom have I in heaven* but thee? Literally, "Who is to me in the heavens?" That is, There is no one there that in my love for him can be compared with thee; no one who can do for me what thou canst do; no one who can meet and satisfy the wants of my soul as thou canst; no one who can be to me what God *is*—what a God *must be.* After all my complaining and my doubts there is no one, not even in the heavens, who can supply the place of *God,* or be to me what God is; and the warm affections of my soul, therefore, are *really* towards him. I feel my need of him; and I must and do find my supreme happiness in him. What would even heaven be to me without God? who there, even of the angels of light, could supply the place of God? ¶ *And* there is *none upon earth* that *I desire beside thee.* That is, Thou art all-sufficient; thou dost meet and satisfy the wants of my nature. All my happiness is in thee; no one on earth could be substituted in thy place, or be to me what thou art as God.

26. *My flesh and my heart faileth.* Flesh and heart here seem to refer to the whole man, body and soul; and the idea is, that his powers of body and mind failed; were spent; were exhausted. This seems to have been said in an *ideal* sense, or by anticipation. He does not mean to say that his strength then had actually failed,

my heart, and my portion [a] for ever.

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

[a] Lam. iii. 24.

but he seems to have placed himself by imagination in the situation where his strength *would* be all gone—in sickness, in weakness, in sorrow, on the bed of death. He asks himself now what would be his strength then, —what would be the object of chief interest and love,—on what he would rely; and he answers without hesitation, and with entire confidence, that he could rely on God, and that He would be his portion for ever. Even then, when heart and flesh should fail, when all the powers of mind and body should be exhausted, the love of God would survive, and he would find strength and joy in Him. ¶ But *God* is *the strength of my heart.* Marg., as in Hebrew, *rock;*— the rock on which my heart relies; that is, my refuge, my defence. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. Comp. Ps. lxi. 2. ¶ *And my portion for ever.* The source of my happiness. Not wealth, then; not honour; not earthly friends; not fame,—will be my reliance and the ground of my hope; but that which I shall regard as most valuable—my supreme joy and rejoicing —will be the fact that God is my friend and portion. With all the doubts which I have had in regard to the rectitude of his government, I am sure that when I come to die, I shall cling to him as my hope, my joy, my all. My last refuge—my sufficient refuge—is God. When men come to die, they *have* no *other* refuge but God. Nothing that they can accumulate of this world's goods will meet their wants then, for God only can give strength and comfort on the bed of death. Of each and all, however vigorous they may now be, it will be true that "flesh and heart" *will "fail;"* of each and all it is true that when this shall occur, none but God can be the portion and the strength of the soul.

27. *For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.* All that are estranged from thee; all who are not thy friends. They will certainly be destroyed. For them there can be no hope. This is the fact which solved the difficulty of the psalmist in regard to the Divine dealings with men, vers. 3–7. The fact that there will be a righteous judgment, in which God will deal with men according to their deserts, made all plain. Comp. vers. 16–20. ¶ *Thou hast destroyed.* That is, Thou wilt certainly destroy. The psalmist places himself in the future, and speaks of this as if it were already done. It will be so certainly done that he could speak of it as if it were already accomplished. ¶ *All them that go a whoring from thee.* The relation of God to his people is often compared in the Scriptures with the marriage relation (comp. Ps. xlv.); and a departure from Him is compared with a want of fidelity to the marriage contract. See Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4; Jer. iii. 8, 9; v. 7; xiii. 27; Ezek. xxiii. 37; Rev. ii. 22.

28. *But* it is *good for me to draw near to God.* That is, It is pleasant; it is profitable; it is *the chief good.* For myself, happiness is to be found in that alone; there I find what my nature pants for and desires. Others find, or attempt to find, happiness in other things; my happiness is found in God alone. This is the result to which the psalmist came after all his perplexity. With all his doubts and difficulties, his *real* desire was to be near to God; his supreme happiness was found there. ¶ *I have put my trust in the Lord* GOD. I have truly confided in him; he is my portion and the sole ground of my reliance. The

doubts which he had had were not, after all, real doubts about the claim of God to confidence. There was an underlying trust in God in the midst of all this. He had not desired to cherish such doubts; he did, on the most calm reflection, still trust in God. ¶ *That I may declare all thy works.* That I might make known thy doings towards the children of men. I have desired rightly to understand thee and thy government, that I might vindicate thy name, and assert thy claim to the love and confidence of mankind. His doubts and perplexities had not really been because he was an enemy of God, or because he *desired* to cherish doubts in regard to him, but because, when appearances were against the equity of the Divine government, he wished to see how the things which occurred *could* be explained consistently with a proper belief in the goodness and justice of God, in order that he might go and explain the matter to his fellow-men. Such perplexities and doubts, therefore, are not really inconsistent with true love for God and genuine confidence in him; and it is well when such doubts are made the means of enabling us more clearly to explain the Divine dealings,—it is well when, under all such doubts and difficulties, we can still find evidence that we truly love God.

PSALM LXXIV.

This psalm is entitled "Maschil of Asaph." On the word *Maschil*—meaning *didactic*, or adapted *to give instruction*—see Notes on the title to Psalm xxxii. On the phrase "of Asaph," see Notes on the title to Psalm lxxiii. It may mean either *for* Asaph, or *of* Asaph; that is, it may either mean that it was composed *by* him, or that it was composed *for* him, to be used by him as the leader of music in public worship. The former is the most common, and the most probable opinion. The title, however, *may* mean that the psalm was dedicated or composed for one of the descendants of this Musician, among whom the office of their ancestor Asaph was hereditary. Thus understood, it might denote simply that the psalm belonged to that class of psalms which were composed for the one who, at the time, presided over the music.

If this is the meaning, there would be no impropriety in supposing that this psalm was composed near the time of the captivity, and had reference to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans, to which the language seems *naturally* to refer. Yet the occasion on which it was composed is not certainly known, and cannot be ascertained *from* the psalm. All that is manifest is, that it was at a time when the land was invaded; when great ravages were committed; and when a work of desolation was perpetrated on the edifices upon Mount Zion, and particularly on the temple. The *language* could be applied either to the destruction of the temple in the time of the Babylonish invasion; or to the times of the Maccabees, and to the desolations brought upon the land by Antiochus Epiphanes; or to some former desolation before the temple was built. Rosenmüller, Venema, De Wette, and some others, suppose that the reference is to the time of the Maccabees. The reason alleged for this opinion is founded on what is said in vers. 4, 9, particularly ver. 9, where it is asserted that "there is no more any prophet;" that is, no one to instruct the people, or to declare what the result or the issue will be. It is alleged by them that at the time of the invasion by the Chaldeans there were prophets in the land, and particularly that Jeremiah was then living, who distinctly predicted what the result of it would be. But this is not a conclusive objection to the idea that the reference is to the destruction of the city and the temple by the Chaldees. The meaning of verse 9 may be that there was no Divine teacher who could *save* the people, or who could *prevent* those desolations; the matter had gone so far that all Divine interference and protection appeared to be withdrawn, and the nation seemed to be abandoned to its fate. Still there can now be no certainty as to the time or the occasion when the psalm was composed; though the most *probable* reference of the psalm is to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

The psalm consists essentially of two parts: a prayer; and the reasons why the prayer is urged, and should be answered.

I. The prayer, vers. 1-3. It is a prayer that God would remember Mount

PSALM LXXIV.

Maschil of [1] Asaph.

O GOD, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

[1] Or, A Psalm *for Asaph to give instruction.*

2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the [2] rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

[2] Or, *tribe.*

Zion, now made desolate, or in ruins.

II. The reasons why the prayer is urged, vers. 4–23.

(1) The desolations which had come upon the city and upon the edifices devoted to religion, vers. 4–8.

(2) The fact that there was among the people, in those times of calamity, no prophet—no messenger of God—no one to show them how long this would continue, or to give them assurance that these desolations would cease, vers. 9–11.

(3) A reference to what God had done for his people in former times when he interposed to save them from their enemies, vers. 12–15.

(4) The fact that God rules over the earth, and has control of all things; that day and night, light and darkness, summer and winter, are all under him, and are directed and controlled *by* him, vers. 16, 17.

(5) A prayer that God would not forget his own cause; that he would remember that these reproaches were reproaches of his own name; that he would call to mind his own solemn covenant; and that he would pity and relieve the people that loved him, now poor and oppressed,—the people that desired to serve and praise him, vers. 18–23.

1. *O God, why hast thou cast* us *off for ever?* Thou *seemest* to have cast us off for ever, or finally. Comp. Notes on Ps. xliv. 9; xiii. 1. ¶ Why *doth thine anger smoke.* See Deut. xxix. 20. The presence of smoke indicates *fire,* and the language here is such as often occurs in the Scriptures, when anger or wrath is compared with fire. See Deut. xxxii. 22; Jer. xv. 14. ¶ *Against the sheep of thy pasture.* Thy people, represented as a flock. See Ps. lxxix. 13; xcv. 7. This increases the tenderness of the appeal. The wrath of God seemed to be enkindled against his own people, helpless and defenceless, who needed his care, and who might naturally look for it—as a flock needs the care of a shepherd, and as the care of the shepherd might be expected. He seemed to be angry with his people, and to have cast them off, when they had every reason to anticipate his protection.

2. *Remember thy congregation.* The word rendered *congregation* means properly an *assembly,* a *community,* and it is frequently applied to the Israelites, or the Jewish people, considered as a body or a community associated for the service of God. Ex. xii. 3; xvi. 1, 2, 9; Lev. iv. 15; Num. xxvii. 17. The word used by the Septuagint is *συναγωγή—synagogue*—but refers here to the whole Jewish people, not to a particular synagogue or congregation. ¶ Which *thou hast purchased of old.* In ancient times; in a former age. That is, Thou hast "purchased" them to thyself, or as thine own, by redeeming them from bondage, thus securing to thyself the right to them, as one does who redeems or purchases a thing. See Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. ¶ *The rod of thine inheritance.* Marg., as in Heb., *tribe.* The Hebrew word—שֵׁבֶט, *shebet*—means properly a *staff,* stick, rod; then, a shepherd's staff, a crook; then, a sceptre; and then it is used to denote a *tribe,* so called from the staff or sceptre which the chief of the tribe carried as the symbol of authority. Ex. xxviii. 21; Judges xx. 2. The word *inheritance* is frequently applied to the children of Israel considered as belonging to God, as property inherited belongs to him who owns it,—perhaps suggesting the idea that the right to them had come down, as inherited property does, from age to age. It was a right over them ac-

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

4 Thine [b] enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

[b] Lam. ii. 7, etc.

quired long before, in the days of the Patriarchs. ¶ Which *thou hast redeemed.* By delivering them out of Egyptian bondage. So the church is now redeemed, and, as such, it belongs to God. ¶ *This mount Zion.* Jerusalem—the seat of government, and of public worship—the capital of the nation. ¶ *Wherein thou hast dwelt.* By the visible symbol of thy presence and power.—On all these considerations the psalmist prays that God would not forget Jerusalem in the present time of desolation and trouble.

3. *Lift up thy feet.* That is, Advance, or draw near. Come and look directly and personally on the desolations which now exist in the holy city. ¶ *Unto the perpetual desolations.* Heb., "the ruins of perpetuity," or eternity; that is, such as have been long continued, and threaten to continue for ever. The ruin had not suddenly come, and it did not seem likely soon to pass away, but appeared to be entire and permanent. The destruction of the city seemed to be complete and final. ¶ Even *all* that *the enemy hath done wickedly.* That is, with wicked intent and purpose. The reference seems to be to the Chaldeans, and to the ruin which they had brought upon the temple and city. ¶ *In the sanctuary.* That is, either Jerusalem, considered as a holy place; or the temple, the place of the public worship of God.

4. *Thine enemies roar.* This refers to the shout and tumult of war. They raised up the war-cry even in the very place where the congregations had been assembled; where God had been worshipped. The word rendered *roar* properly has reference to wild beasts; and the meaning is, that their war-cry resembled the howling of beasts of prey. ¶ *In the midst of thy congregations.* Literally, *in the midst of thine assembly.* This is a different word from that which is rendered *congregation* in ver. 2. This word—מוֹעֵד, *moaid*—means a meeting together by mutual appointment, and is often applied to the meeting of God with his people at the tabernacle, which was therefore called "the tent of the congregation,"—or, more properly, "the tent of meeting,"—as the place where God *met* with his people, Ex. xxix. 10, 44; xxxiii. 7; Lev. iii. 8, 13; x. 7, 9; *et sæpe.* The meaning here is, that they roared like wild beasts in the very place which God had appointed as the place where he would meet with his people. ¶ *They set up their ensigns* for *signs.* That is, they set up *their* banners or standards, as *the* standards of the place; as that which indicated sovereignty over the place. They proclaimed thus that it was a conquered place, and they set up their own standards as denoting their title to it, or as declaring that they ruled there. It was no longer a place sacred to God; it was publicly seen to belong to a foreign power.

5. A man *was famous.* Literally, "He is known;" or, shall be known. That is, he was or shall be celebrated. ¶ *According as he had lifted up axes.* Literally, "As one raising on high axes;" *i. e.* as one lifts up his axe high in the air in order to strike an effectual stroke. ¶ *Upon the thick trees.* The clumps of trees; the trees standing thick together. That is, As he showed skill and ability in cutting these down, and laying them low. His celebrity was founded on the rapidity with which the strokes of the axe fell on the trees, and his success in laying low the pride of the forest. According to our common

6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

7 They have [1] cast fire into thy sanctuary; they have defiled *by* *casting down* the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.

8 They said in their hearts, Let us [2] destroy them together:

[1] *sent thy sanctuary into the fire.* [2] *break.*

translation the meaning is, that *formerly* a man derived his fame from his skill and success in wielding his axe so as to lay the forest low, but that *now* his fame was to be derived from another source, viz., the skill and power with which he cut down the elaborately-carved work of the sanctuary, despoiled the columns of their ornaments, and demolished the columns themselves. But another interpretation *may* be given to this, as has been suggested by Prof. Alexander. It is, that "the ruthless enemy is known or recognized as dealing with the sanctuary no more tenderly than a woodman with the forest which he fells." The former, however, is the more natural, as well as the more common interpretation. Luther renders it, "One sees the axe glitter on high, as one cuts wood in the forest." The Vulgate, and the Septuagint, "The signs pointing to the entrance above that they did not know." What idea was attached to this rendering, it is impossible to determine.

6. *But now they break down the carved work thereof*, etc. Literally, "But now the carvings of it together [at once] with sledge and hammers they beat down." The carved work refers evidently to the ornaments of the temple. The word used here—פִּתּוּחֶיהָ, *pittuahh*—is rendered *engraving, carved work*, or *carving;* Ex. xxviii. 11, 21, 36; xxxix. 6, 14, 30; Zech. iii. 9; 2 Chron. ii. 14. It is the very word which in 1 Kings vi. 29 is applied to the ornaments around the walls of the temple—the "carved figures of cherubim, and palm trees, and open flowers,"—and there can be no doubt that the allusion here is to those ornaments. These were rudely cut down, or knocked off, with axes and hammers, as a man lays low the trees of the wood. The phrase "at once" means that they drove forward the work with all despatch. They spared none of them. They treated them all alike as an axeman does the trees of a forest when his object is to clear the land.

7. *They have cast fire into thy sanctuary.* Into the temple to destroy it. Literally, "They have cast thy sanctuary into the fire." The meaning is, that they had burned it down. This was actually done by the Chaldeans, 2 Kings xxv. 9; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. ¶ *They have defiled* by casting down *the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.* The place where thy name dwelt or was recorded (Ex. xx. 24); that is, the place where God's name was known, or where he was worshipped. The literal meaning is, "To the earth they have defiled the dwelling of thy name." The idea is, that they had defiled or polluted the temple by throwing it to the ground; by making it a heap of ruins; by making it undistinguishable from common earth.

8. *They said in their hearts.* They purposed; they designed it. ¶ *Let us destroy them together.* Let us destroy all these buildings, temples, towers, and walls at the same time; let us make an entire destruction of them all. ¶ *They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.* The phrase "they have burned up" must refer to the places or edifices where assemblies for public worship were held, since it cannot be supposed that the idea is that they had burned up the assemblies of worshippers themselves. The word rendered *synagogues* is the same in the Hebrew that is used in ver. 4, and is there rendered *congregations.* It means *assemblies*, persons collected together for public worship. See

they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

9 We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.

Notes on that verse. It is not used in the Bible to denote *places* for the meetings of such assemblies, nor is it elsewhere rendered *synagogues*. It is translated by the word *seasons*, Gen. i. 14; Ex. xiii. 10, *et al.*;—*set time*, Gen. xvii. 21; Ex. ix. 5, *et al.*; *time appointed*, Ex. xxiii. 15; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, *et al.*;—*congregation*, Lev. i. 1, 3, 5; iii. 2, 8, 13, *and very often*;—*feasts*, Lev. xxiii. 2, 4, 37, *et al.*;—*solemnity*, Deut. xxxi. 10; Isa. xxxiii. 20;—and so also, set feasts, solemn feasts, appointed feasts, etc. But in no instance does it *necessarily* refer to an *edifice*, unless it is in the place before us. There is no reason, however, for doubting that, from the necessity of the case, in the course of events, there would be other places for assembling for the worship of God than the temple, and that in different cities, villages, towns, and neighbourhoods, persons would be collected together for some form of social religious service. Buildings or tents would be necessary for the accommodation of such assemblages; and this, in time, might be developed into a system, till in this way the whole arrangement for *synagogues* might have grown up in the land. The exact origin of synagogues is not indeed known. Jahn ('Biblical Archæology,' § 344) supposes that they sprang up during the Babylonish captivity, and that they had their origin in the fact that the people, when deprived of their customary religious privileges, would collect around some prophet, or other pious man, who would teach them and their children the duties of religion, exhort them to good conduct, and read to them out of the sacred books. Comp. Ezek. xiv. 1; xx. 1; Dan. vi. 11; Neh. viii. 18. There seems, however, no good reason for doubting that synagogues may have existed before the time of the captivity, and may have sprung up in the manner suggested above from the necessities of the people, probably at first without any fixed rule or law on the subject, but as convenience suggested, and that they may at last, by custom and law, have grown into the regular form which they assumed as a part of the national worship. Comp. Kitto's Encyc. Art. '*Synagogue.*' I see no improbability, therefore, in supposing that the word here *may* refer to such edifices at the time when this psalm was composed. These, if they existed, would naturally be destroyed by the Chaldeans, as well as the temple itself.

9. *We see not our signs.* The emblems of worship, or the national emblems or banners, which we have been accustomed to see. There are no signals or tokens of our nationality in the land. All have been removed by the invaders, and we see everywhere evidences of the presence of a foreign power. The marks of our own independency are gone. The nation is subdued and conquered. ¶ There is *no more any prophet.* No one is raised up as the special messenger of God to assure us of his favour, or to take the lead in the national troubles. In times of danger God had been accustomed to send to them some special teacher who would declare his will, direct the nation what to do, and give encouraging assurances that the national troubles would cease, and that deliverance would come. They saw no such messengers of God now. This is not inconsistent with the supposition that this psalm was written before the captivity, and in the time of the Chaldean invasion, or with the supposition that Jeremiah was then alive; for the meaning may be, not that literally there was *no* prophet in the land, but that there was no one who had come from God as a special messenger of comfort and deliverance. Ruin had come upon them, and there were no indications

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

12 For God *is* my King [c] of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

13 Thou [d] didst [1] divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest [e] the heads of the [2] dragons in the waters.

c Ps. xliv. 4. *d* Ex. xiv. 21. [1] *break.*

e Isa. li. 9, 10; Ez. xxix. 3. [2] Or, *whales.*

of Divine interposition in their behalf. ¶ *Neither* is there *among us any that knoweth how long.* How long these calamities are to continue. No one can tell when they are to end. The prophetic office seemed to have ceased among them. It was renewed, however, after the captivity, in the case of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Malachi.

10. *O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?* etc. How long shall this state of things be allowed to continue? Is there to be no end to it? Are these desolations never to be repaired,—these ruins never to be rebuilt? It *seemed* so; and hence this earnest appeal. So to us it often appears as if our trials were never to come to an end. One calamity succeeds another; and there comes no relief. Yet there *is* relief. Deliverance *may* come, and soon come, in the present life;—or if not in the present life, yet to all those who are the children of God it *will* soon come by their removal to a world where trial will be for ever unknown.

11. *Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?* Why dost thou not stretch forth thy hand for our deliverance? The hand, especially the right hand, is the instrument by which we wield a sword, or strike a blow; and the expression here is equivalent to asking why God did not interfere and save them. ¶ *Pluck* it *out of thy bosom.* As if God had hidden his hand beneath the folds of his garment, or had wrapped his robe tightly around him. It *seemed* as if he had done this, as if he looked calmly on, and saw the temple fired, the synagogues burned up, the land laid waste, and the people slaughtered, without an attempt to interpose. How often are we constrained to use similar language,—to ask a similar question,—when iniquity abounds, when crime prevails, when sinners are perishing, when the church mourns,—for God *seems* to have withdrawn his hand, and to be looking on with unconcern! No one can tell *why* this is so; and, without irreverence, or a spirit of murmuring, but deeply affected with the mystery of the fact, we *may* ask "Why" this is so.

12. *For God* is *my King of old.* That is, the king, or ruler of his people. The people had acknowledged him as their king and ruler, and he had showed himself to be such. This is given as a reason why he should now interpose in their behalf. It is an argument, proper always to be urged, drawn from the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God. ¶ *Working salvation in the midst of the earth.* Salvation for his people. The reference here particularly is to what he had done for his people in delivering them from bondage in Egypt, and conducting them to the promised land, as is stated in the following verses.

13. *Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength.* Marg., as in Heb., *break.* That is, he had by his power *broken up* the strength of the sea so that it offered no resistance to their passing through it. The allusion is evidently to the passage through the Red Sea, Ex. xiv. 21. ¶ *Thou brakest the heads of the dragons.* Marg., *whales.* On the meaning of the word used here—*Tannin*—see Notes on Isa. xiii. 22; Job xxx. 29. It refers here, undoubtedly, to croco-

14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

15 Thou didst cleave [f] the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up [1] mighty rivers.

16 The day [g] *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light [h] and the sun.

17 Thou hast set all the bor-

[f] Jos. iii. 13, etc.
[1] *rivers of strength.*

[g] Ps. lxv. 8. [h] Ps. cxxxvi. 7—9.

diles or sea-monsters. The language here is used to denote the absolute power of God as manifested over the sea when the people of Israel passed through it. It was *as if* by slaying all the mighty monsters of the deep that would have resisted their passage, he had made their transit entirely safe. ¶ *In the waters.* That reside in the waters of the sea.

14. *Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces.* On the meaning of the word *leviathan*, see Notes on Job xli. 1. The word is used here as descriptive of sea-monsters. ¶ And *gavest him* to be *meat.* Gavest him for *food.* ¶ *To the people inhabiting the wilderness.* That is, the sea-monsters were killed, and, being thrown on shore, were gathered for food. The "inhabitants of the wilderness" or the desert, *may* refer either to the wild and savage tribes of men that lived on the shores of the sea, and that subsisted mainly on fish, or it *may* refer to the wild animals of the desert that consumed such sea-monsters as they were cast up on the shore. There is no allusion to the Israelites considered as passing through the desert, as if *they* had fed on these sea-monsters. The essential *idea* is, that these monsters were put to death, or were so removed out of the way as to offer no obstruction to the passage of the Israelites through the sea. It was *as if* they had been killed. The image is entirely poetic, and there is no necessity for supposing that such a thing literally occurred.

15. *Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood.* That is, the source of the streams and the streams themselves. The main allusion is probably to the Jordan, and the idea is, that God had, as it were, divided *all* the waters, or prevented any obstruction to his people from the river in any respect;—as if the waters in the very springs and fountains, and the waters in the channel of the river flowing from those springs and fountains, had been so restrained and *divided* that there was a safe passage through them. Josh. iii. 14–17. ¶ *Thou driedst up mighty rivers.* Marg., *rivers of strength.* The Hebrew—אֵיתָן, *aithan*—(comp. Deut. xxi. 4; Amos v. 24; 1 Kings viii. 2)—means rather perennial, constant, ever-flowing. The allusion is to rivers or streams that flow constantly, or that do not dry up. It was this which made the miracle so apparent. It could not be pretended that they had gone over the bed of a stream which was *accustomed* to be dry at certain seasons of the year. They passed over rivers that *never* dried up; and, therefore, it could have been only by miracle. The main allusion is undoubtedly to the passage of the Jordan.

16. *The day* is *thine, the night also* is *thine.* Thou hast universal dominion. All things are under thy control. Thou hast power, therefore, to grant what we desire of thee. ¶ *Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.* He who has made the sun—that greatest and noblest object of creation to the view of man—must have almighty power, and must be able to give what we need.

17. *Thou hast set all the borders of the earth.* Thou hast established all the boundaries of the world;—that is, the boundaries of the earth itself;—or the natural boundaries of nations and people, made by seas, mountains, rivers, and deserts. The language in regard to the first of

ders of the earth: thou hast made [1] summer and winter.

18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the [i] foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude *of the wicked:* forget not the congregation of thy [k] poor for ever.

[1] *them.* [i] Ps. xciv. 7, 8. [k] Ps. lxviii. 10.

these—the earth itself—would be derived from the prevalent mode of speaking, as if the earth were a plane, and had limits—a common mode of expression in the Scriptures, as it is in all ancient writings, and in the common language of men, even of philosophers. In regard to the latter idea, the language would imply that God had fixed, by his own power and will, all the natural boundaries of nations, or that his dominion is over all the earth. There *are* natural boundaries, or arrangements in nature, which tend to break up the one great family of man into separate nations, and which seem to have been designed for that. Comp. Acts xvii. 26. Over all these God presides, and he has his own great plans to accomplish by the arrangement. ¶ *Thou hast made summer and winter.* Literally, as in the margin, *Summer and winter, thou hast made them.* That is, he has so made the earth that these various seasons will occur. The fact that there are different seasons of the year, or that the year is divided into seasons, is to be traced to the agency of God. He has so made the world that these changes will take place. Nothing is the result of chance; all things in the arrangements of nature are by his design.

18. *Remember this,* that *the enemy hath reproached.* Has used opprobrious and abusive words in regard to thee, and to thy people. The idea is, that *religion*—the true religion—had been reproached by the foe. They had treated that religion as if it were false; they had reproached God as if he were a false God, and as if he were unable to defend his people. Comp. Isa. xxxvi. 4–10, 13–20; xxxvii. 10–13, 23. The prayer here is, that God would remember that these words of reproach were against *himself,* and that he would regard them *as such.* ¶ *And* that *the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.* Have blasphemed *thee*—the *name* often being put for the person himself. The word *foolish* here may refer to them as *wicked* as well as foolish. *Wickedness* and *folly* are so connected,—they are so commonly combined, that the word may be used to describe the enemies of God in either sense—characterising their conduct as *either* the one or the other. Comp. Notes on Ps. xiv. 1.

19. *O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove.* The *life* of thy turtle-dove; or, thy turtle-dove itself. The turtle-dove is a name of endearment for one beloved, in Cant. ii. 12, and is thus applied here to the people of Israel. The leading idea in such an application of the word is that of innocence, harmlessness, timidity, gentleness. The thought here is that of a people dear to God, now timid and alarmed. It is the prayer of a people beloved by God that he would not deliver them to their enemies. The prayer may be regarded as one which was *used* on the occasion referred to in the psalm; or, as a *general* prayer for the people of God, considered as exposed to ravening enemies. ¶ *Unto the multitude* of the wicked. The words *of the wicked* are not in the original. The word rendered *multitude*—חַיָּה, *hhayyah*—(comp. Notes on Ps. lxviii. 10)—is the same which in the other member of the sentence is rendered *congregation.* It may be applied to a *herd* of cattle, tame or wild; and then to a *people*—a band, a troop, a host—whether of orderly and civilized, or of wild and savage people. It seems to be used in this double sense in the verse before us; in the first member of the verse, "deliver not thy

20 Have respect unto the *l* covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.

22 Arise, O God, plead thine

l Gen. xvii. 7, 8; Lev xxvi. 45; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Ps. cvi. 45; Jer. xxxiv. 13; Heb. viii. 8—13.

turtle-dove *to the multitude*—to the wild beast, or to the savage hosts; in the latter, "forget not *the congregation* of thy poor"—thy flock—thy people—considered as timid or alarmed. Save the timid and trembling flock from beasts of prey.

20. *Have respect unto the covenant.* The covenant which thou hast made with thy people, promising, on thy part, to protect them, and to be their God. Comp. Deut. iv. 13; v. 2; xxvi. 18, 19. The prayer here is, that God would remember, in the day of national calamity, the solemn promise implied in that covenant, and that he would interpose to save his people. Comp. Gen. ix. 15; Lev. xxvi. 42; Ezek. xvi. 60; Luke i. 72. This may be regarded as the language which the people *did* use when these calamities were about to come upon them. ¶ *For the dark places of the earth.* The allusion here is to the lands from whence came the armies that had invaded Judea, and that threatened desolation. They were dark regions of heathenism and idolatry. ¶ *Are full of the habitations of cruelty.* The abodes of violence, or of violent and cruel men. They had sent forth their armies from such places for purposes of conquest and rapine, and no compassion could be expected from them. Their numbers were so great, and their character was so fierce and warlike, that the people of Israel could find defence and security only in God; and they, therefore, plead with him that he would interpose in their behalf. The prayer in this passage may with propriety be used by the people of God now. It is still true that "the dark parts of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and in view of this fact, and of the utter hopelessness of the renovation of the world by any human means, or by any progress which society can make of itself, it is proper to seek God's interposition. And it is proper in such prayers to him now, as in ancient times, to make the ground of our appeal to him his own gracious covenant; his promises made to his church; his solemn assurances that this state of things shall not always continue, but that the time will arrive when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

21. *O let not the oppressed return ashamed.* Ashamed by being disappointed, as if they had trusted in that which had no claims to confidence. Comp. Notes on Job vi. 20. The word rendered *oppressed*, means *trodden down, crushed, broken, afflicted.* It refers to the people as attacked by foreign armies, or as crushed by those who had gained power over them. The word *return* refers to their coming back from God—from the throne of mercy. Let them not come back from thee with no assurance of thy favour; with no evidence that their prayers have been heard; let them not come back, subject to the reproach that they had made their appeal to thee in vain. ¶ *Let the poor and needy praise thy name.* The people who are oppressed and helpless. Let them have occasion to praise thee because their prayer has been heard, and because thou dost save them.

22. *Arise, O God.* As if God were now insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of his people; as if he were inattentive and indisposed to come to their help. See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. ¶ *Plead thine own cause.* Literally, "Contend thine own contention." That is, Maintain a cause which is really thine own. Thine own honour is concerned; thine own law and au-

own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee [1] increaseth continually.

[1] *ascendeth*, Jonah i. 2.

thority are assailed; the war is really made on *thee*. This is always the true idea in the prayers which are offered for the conversion of sinners, for the establishment of truth, and for the spread of the Gospel in the world. It is not originally the cause of the church; it is the cause of God. Everything in regard to truth, to justice, to humanity, to temperance, to liberty, to religion, is the cause of God. All the assaults made on these, are assaults made on God. ¶ *Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.* Constantly. He does not cease. The word *foolish* refers to the wicked. The idea is, that the wicked constantly reproach God—either by their language or their conduct; and this is a reason for calling on him to interpose. No better reason for asking his interposition can be given, than that such conduct *is* a real reproach to God, and reflects on his honour in the world.

23. *Forget not the voice of thine enemies.* The voice of thine enemies clamouring for the destruction of thy people. Comp. Ps. cxxxvii. 7. The prayer is, that God would bring deserved chastisement upon them for their purposes and their aims against his people. It is not necessarily a prayer for vengeance; it is a prayer for just retribution. ¶ *The tumult of those that rise up against thee.* Of those that make war on thee, and on thy people. The word *tumult* here means clamour or shout—as the shout of battle. The reference is to the movement of a host pressing on to conquest, encouraging and exciting each other, and endeavouring to intimidate their enemies by the loud clamour of the war-cry. It is a description of what had occurred among the main events referred to in the psalm, when the enemy came in to lay waste the capital, and to spread desolation throughout the land. ¶ *Increaseth continually.* Marg., as in Heb., *Ascendeth.* That is, it seems to go up; it is the swelling clamour of a great multitude of warriors intent on conquest. A cry or clamour thus seems to swell or rise on the air, and (as it were) to ascend to God. The prayer here is, that God would regard that cry, not in the sense that he would grant them the fulfilment of their wishes, but in the sense that he would recompense them as they deserved. It is in this sense that the clamours of the wicked ascend to heaven,—in this sense that God will regard them, *as if* they were a prayer for just retribution.

PSALM LXXV.

This psalm, like the two previous psalms, is ascribed to Asaph (see Introd. to Ps. lxxiii.), and there is no reason to doubt that it is correctly attributed to him. On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Introd. to Ps. iv. On the phrase "Al-taschith," see Notes on the title to Ps. lvii. The phrase "A Psalm or Song" (in Heb., *a psalm—a song*), occurs also in the title to other psalms, as Ps. xxx., lxv., etc.

It is not possible now to determine the occasion on which this psalm was composed, as it is not indicated in the title, and there are no historical references in the psalm itself which would enable us to ascertain it. The general purpose is indicated in ver. 1, which is to ascribe praise to God for some particular manifestation of his favour. So far as can be conjectured from the psalm, there are two things which may have been referred to. (I.) The first is, that it was composed by some one—or for some one, in his name, as expressing his feelings—who was about to enter on the administration of the affairs of the nation, apparently a young prince soon to ascend the throne. See ver. 2, "When I shall receive the congregation," etc. (II.) The second is, that it would seem to have been a time

PSALM LXXV.

To the chief Musician, [1] Al-taschith. *m*
A Psalm *or* Song [2] of Asaph.

UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give

[1] Or, *Destroy not.* *m* Ps. lvii., *title.*

of national danger; a time when there may have been other aspirants for the throne; a time when wicked and powerful men had combined for the purpose of usurping the authority, and setting aside the legitimate claimant to power, or when there seemed to have been a universal dissolution of authority, or general anarchy. See ver. 3, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved." Comp. vers. 4, 5. In these circumstances, in this general rebellion, in this time of resistance to lawful authority, and of combination and conspiracy against right, the speaker in the psalm expresses confidence in God as the source of all authority (ver. 6); as the "Judge" (ver. 7); as a God in whose hand is a cup of punishment which he will administer to all wicked men, ver. 8. *The psalm, therefore, expresses confidence in God in the endeavour to assert the claims of legitimate authority.*

Another, and a more common view, however, has been taken of the psalm, which is, that it refers to God as the Ruler among the nations, and as asserting that he will in due time take vengeance on those who are in rebellion against him. This is the view of De Wette, Prof. Alexander, Luther, and others. It was also the view taken by the translators of the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. Comp., however, Notes on ver. 2.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—(1) A purpose of the author of the psalm to praise God for the manifestation of his wondrous works, ver. 1. (2) His purpose when he should "receive the congregation," or should be invested with authority, to judge uprightly, or to discharge his duties with fidelity, ver. 2. (3) A statement of the existing disorder and confusion, as if the very structure of society was broken up, ver. 3. (4) Advice addressed to the authors of the prevailing disorder not to pursue their plans of evil (vers. 4-8), for two reasons:—(*a*) Promotion or success must come from God, or from his counsels, and not by chance, or by any laws of nature (vers. 6, 7); and (*b*) because God is a righteous Judge, and the wicked can expect nothing but punishment at his hand, ver. 8. (5) A purpose to praise God, in view of the fact that all the power of the wicked would be broken, but the power of the righteous would be maintained and exalted, vers. 9, 10.

thanks: for *that* thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.

2 [3] When I shall receive the

[2] Or, *for.* [3] Or, *Shall I take a set time.*

1. *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks.* We, the people; language which would be appropriate to public thanksgiving,—showing that the psalm was designed for public use. The *reasons* for this public thanksgiving are stated in the subsequent part of the psalm. ¶ *Do we give thanks.* The repetition is emphatic. The idea is, that the occasion was one for *special* thanksgiving. ¶ *For* that *thy name is near.* Literally, "and near is thy name." The word *name* is often used to designate the person himself; and the idea here is, that *God* was near; that he had manifested himself to them in some special manner, and that for this there was occasion of praise. Comp. Jer. xxiii. 23. ¶ *Thy wondrous works declare.* Or, "They declare thy wondrous works." The Septuagint renders it, "I will declare all thy wondrous works." The Latin Vulgate, "We will declare thy wonders." Luther, "We will declare thy wonders, that thy name is so near." Prof. Alexander, "They recount thy wonders." The meaning seems to be, "They," that is, the people, "declare thy wondrous works." Thy marvellous doings constitute the foundation for praise—for the praise now offered.

2. *When I shall receive the congregation.* The marginal rendering is, *Take a set time.* The phrase is thus rendered in most of the versions. So the Septuagint, "When I take the time"—ὅταν λάβω καιρὸν. So the

congregation, I will judge [n] uprightly.

[n] 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.

3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.

4 I said unto the fools, Deal

Vulgate, "When I accept the time." So Luther, "When in its own time." So De Wette, "When I take the time." According to this interpretation, this is the language of God, as if implying that, although "the earth" was then "dissolved," or although disorders were allowed to exist, yet he would take a set time, or take the appointed time for judgment, and would pronounce a sentence on the conduct of men, and deal with them in a righteous manner, punishing the rebellious, and vindicating his own cause. The proper interpretation of the passage turns on the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered in the text *congregation*—מוֹעֵד *moaid*. See the word explained in the Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 8. It may mean a set time, an appointed season, 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 11; or a coming together, an assembly, Job xxx. 23; or a place of assemblage, as the tabernacle, etc.; Ex. xxvii. 21; xl. 22; Ps. lxxiv. 8. It *may*, therefore, be applied to the congregation of the Jewish people —the nation considered *as* an assemblage for the worship of God; and the idea of *taking* this, or *receiving* this, may be applied to the act of assuming authority or sovereignty over the people, and hence the language may be used to denote the entrance on the discharge of the duties of such sovereignty. The language would be applicable to one who had the right of such an elevation to power—a prince —an heir apparent,—in a time when his right was disputed; when there was an organized opposition to him; or when the nation was in a state of anarchy and confusion. It seems to me that this supposition best accords with the proper meaning of the language, and with the scope of the psalm. ¶ *I will judge uprightly.* I will put down all this opposition to law. I will deal with exact justice between man and man. I will restore order, and the supremacy of law, to the state. The language, therefore, according to this interpretation, is not the language of God, but that of a prince having a right to the throne, and about to ascend it in a time of great misrule and disorder.

3. *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved.* The word rendered *dissolved* means properly to melt, to flow down; then, to melt away, to pine away, to perish. Isa. lxiv. 7; Job xxx. 22; Nahum i. 5; Ps. cvii. 26. Here it means that there was, as it were, a general breaking up of things; or that none of the institutions of the land seemed to have any stability. There seemed to be no government, but universal anarchy and confusion. ¶ *I bear up the pillars of it.* Of the earth; of society. The earth here is compared with an edifice supported by pillars. Comp. Judges xvi. 26; 1 Sam. ii. 8; 1 Tim. iii. 15. As applied to a prince or ruler, this means that the permanent structure of the state, the welfare of society, depended on his administration. If, according to the view of others, it is applied to God, the meaning is, that as he upholds the world, there cannot be permanent misrule; that amidst all the commotions of earth, and all that seemed to threaten ruin, his hand sustained all, and he would not allow things to proceed to permanent disorder. In the former case, the assertion *would* be true if a prince felt that he had power to support the government, and to restore order; in the latter case, it *must* be true, for God sustains the earth, and as he can check disorder when he shall judge it best to interpose, so he will not permit it ultimately to prevail. ¶ *Selah.* A musical pause. See Notes on Ps. iii. 2.

4. *I said unto the fools.* To the wicked men in rebellion. Folly and wickedness in the Bible are synonymous terms, as they are identical in

not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the [o] horn:

5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not with* a stiff neck.

6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the [1] south:

o Zech. i. 21. [1] *desert.*

fact. See Notes on Ps. xiv. 1. ¶ *Deal not foolishly.* Act not foolishly; carry not out your wicked plans. Do not pursue your schemes of wickedness and folly, for they cannot be successful, and they will only tend to involve you in ruin. ¶ *And to the wicked.* The wicked men engaged in rebellion—either against a lawful human government, or against God. ¶ *Lift not up the horn.* The horn is a symbol of strength. Comp. Job xvi. 15; Dan. vii. 7, 8, 11, 21; viii. 5, 8, 9, 21. This is to be understood as the language of the person represented as speaking in the psalm—whether a prince, or whether God himself. It is counsel addressed to the wicked, that they should not attempt to put forth their strength in the accomplishment of their evil purposes. The reason given for this is stated in ver. 6, viz. that success does not depend on chance, or on human power, but must come from God.

5. *Lift not up your horn on high.* In a proud, self-confident, arrogant manner. ¶ *Speak* not with *a stiff neck.* With arrogance and pride; in a haughty, imperious manner. The word rendered *stiff* (literally *a neck of stiffness*) — עָתָק, *athak* — means properly bold, impudent, wicked; and the idea is that of speaking as those do who are impudent, shameless, bold, licentious,—indicating confidence in themselves, and a reckless disregard of truth and of the rights of others. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "And speak not unrighteousness against God."

6. *For promotion.* The word here used in the original, and rendered *promotion*—דְּרִימ, *harim*—is susceptible of two quite different significations. According to one—that which is adopted by our translators—it is the infinitive (Hiphil) of רוּם, *rum, to raise*—the word used in vers. 5, 6, and there rendered *lift up.* Thus it would mean, that *to lift up* is not the work of men, or is not originated by the earth—does not originate from any part of it, east, west, or south, but must come from God alone. According to the other view, this word is the plural of הָר, *har, mountain,* and would mean that *something*—(something understood—as *judgment*)—comes not "from the east, nor the west, nor *from the desert of mountains,*" the mountainous regions of the south, but must come from God. The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and the ancient versions generally, adopt the latter interpretation. De Wette renders it as our translators have done. This interpretation—rendering it *promotion*—seems to be the true one, for in the two previous verses this was the prominent idea—a caution against attempting *to lift themselves up,* or to exalt themselves, and in this and the following verse a reason is given for this caution, to wit, that the whole question about success or prosperity depends not on anything here below; not on any natural advantages of situation, or on any human skill or power; but on God alone. It was in vain, in regard to such an object, to form human alliances, or to depend on natural advantages; and therefore men should not depend on these things, but only on God. ¶ *Neither from the east.* Literally, *from the outgoing; i. e.* of the sun. The meaning may either be that success would not depend on any natural advantages of country furnished in the East; or that the persons referred to were seeking to form alliances with an Eastern people, and then the statement would be that no such alliances would of themselves secure success. ¶ *Nor from the west.* The *setting;* that is, the place where the sun goes down. This also may

7 But God *is* the judge; he [p] putteth down one, and setteth up another.

8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, [q] and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.

[p] 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8.

[q] Rev. xiv. 9, 10.

refer either to the natural advantages of a Western country, or to some alliance which it was intended to form with the people there. ¶ *Nor from the south.* Marg., as in Heb., *desert.* The reference is to the rocky and barren regions south of Palestine, and the allusion here also may be either to some natural advantages of those regions, or to some alliance which it was proposed to form.

7. *But God* is *the judge.* All depends on him, not on the natural advantages of a country; not on human strength, human skill, or human prowess. Whatever may be the natural resources of a country; whatever may be the enterprise, the numbers, or the valour of its inhabitants; whatever alliances of peace or war they may form with other nations, yet success depends on God. He presides over all; he can give success when it is least expected; and he also can humble men when they have made the most ample preparations for success, and anticipate it in the most confident manner. ¶ *He putteth down one, and setteth up another.* Literally, "This one he humbles, and this he exalts." This is true alike of an individual or a nation. The word rendered *setteth up* is the same which is used in vers. 4, 5, 6, rendered "Lift up," and "promotion." The idea is, that in the matter of "lifting up," or "promotion," all depends on God. He is a sovereign, and he confers exaltation, whether of an individual or a nation, as he pleases.

8. *For in the hand of the* LORD, etc. The general idea in this verse is, that God holds in his hand a cup for men to drink; a cup whose contents will tend to prolong life, or to cause death. See the idea in this passage fully explained in the Notes on Job xxi. 20; Ps. lx. 3; Isa. li. 17; Rev. xiv. 10. ¶ *And the wine is red.* The word here used—חָמַר, *khamar*—may mean either to boil up, or to be red—from the idea of boiling, or becoming heated. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "And he pours it out from this into that;" that is, he draws it off, as is done with wine. The true idea in the expression is probably that it *ferments;* and the meaning may be that the wrath of God seems to boil like fermenting liquor. ¶ *It is full of mixture.* Mixed with spices, in order to increase its strength; or, as we should say, *drugged.* This was frequently done in order to increase the intoxicating quality of wine. The idea is, that the wrath of God was *like* wine whose native strength, or power of producing intoxication, was thus increased by drugs. ¶ *And he poureth out of the same.* He pours it out in order that his enemies may drink it; in other words, they reel and stagger under the expressions of his wrath, as men reel and stagger under the influence of spiced or drugged wine. ¶ *But the dregs thereof.* The *lees*—the settlings—what remains after the wine is racked off. See Notes on Isa. xxv. 6. This would contain the strongest part of the mixture; and the idea is, that they would drink the wrath of God to the utmost. ¶ *All the wicked of the earth.* Wicked men everywhere. The expression of the wrath of God would not be confined to one nation, or one people; but wherever wicked men are found, he will punish them. He will be just in his dealings with all men. ¶ *Shall wring* them *out.* Wine was kept in skins; and the idea here is, that they would wring out these skins so as to get out *all* that there was in them, and leave nothing remaining. The

9 But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

10 All [r] the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

[r] Ps. ci. 8.

wrath of God would be exhausted in the punishment of wicked men, *as if* it were all *wrung out*. ¶ And *drink* them. Not merely the wine; but the dregs; all that there was. Wicked men will suffer *all* that there is in the justice of God.

9. *But I will declare for ever.* I,—the author of the psalm. I will make known at all times the character of God, and will declare the truth respecting his works and ways. The particular *mode* as referred to here, was *praise*. ¶ *I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.* The God whom Jacob worshipped; the God who proved himself to be his Friend, thus showing that he is the Friend of all that trust in him. See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 6.

10. *All the horns of the wicked,* etc. See Notes on ver. 4. The meaning is, I will destroy all their power. This, too, may refer to the author of the psalm, supposed to be a prince or ruler about to ascend the throne, and to assert his rightful authority. This indicates his purpose in regard to his administration (comp. ver. 2); the principles on which he would administer his government. It would be an administration under which the wicked would be punished, and where the righteous would be protected. In this manner it would be an emblem of the administration of God. All just human governments are founded on the same principles as the government of God. Men have only to apply to the affairs of civil society the principles on which God governs the universe, to constitute the most perfect human administration. Those which come nearest to that, most nearly approximate perfection; and civil governments will reach their end, and accomplish their design, only when those principles shall be universally applied among men.

PSALM LXXVI.

This psalm is one of those which in the title are ascribed to Asaph (see Introduction to Psalm lxxiii.), and there is no reason to call in question that statement. On the phrase "To the chief Musician on Neginoth," see Introd. to Ps. iv.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not stated, and cannot now be ascertained. The Septuagint regards it as having had reference to the Assyrians—ᾠδὴ πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον—"An ode to the Assyrian." So the Latin Vulgate; Canticum ad Assyrios. This is the opinion adopted also by Jarchi. The title in the Syriac version is, "When Rabbah of the Ammonites was laid waste; and farther it describes the judgment of the Messiah against the wicked." Grotius supposes that it was intended to describe the victory over the Ammonites. Rüdinger ascribes its composition to the time of the Maccabees. De Wette supposes that it refers to some late period of the Jewish history, but that the particular time is unknown. It would be vain to attempt to ascertain with any certainty the particular occasion on which the psalm was composed. It was evidently on some occasion when an attack had been made on "Salem," that is, on Jerusalem (vers. 2, 3), and when that attack had been repelled, and the enemy had been driven back. Many of the circumstances in the psalm would agree well with the account of the invasion of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, but there were many other occasions in the Jewish history to which it would, in like manner, be applicable.

The psalm is a song of praise for deliverance from an enemy. The contents are as follows:—I. The fact that God had made himself known *in Judah*, or to the Jewish people,—or, that he had manifested himself to them in a remarkable manner, ver. 1. II. The fact that he had showed this in a special manner in "Salem," the capital of the nation,—referring to some particular time in which this was done, ver. 2. III. The manner in which he had done this,—by breaking the arrows of the bow, and the shield; by showing that his power was

PSALM LXXVI.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm *or* Song [1] of Asaph.

IN [s] Judah [t] *is* God known; his name *is* great in Israel.

2 In [u] Salem also is his taber-

[1] Or, *for*.
[s] Ps. xlviii. 1, etc.
[t] Deut. iv. 7, 8.
[u] Ps. cxxxii. 13.

nacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion.

3 There [v] brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

4 Thou *art* more glorious *and*

[v] Ps. xlvi. 9.

superior to all the defences which men had set up; and by overcoming entirely the invading foe, vers. 3-6. IV. The fact that, on this account, God was to be feared and reverenced, vers. 7-9. V. The statement of a great truth, and a most important principle, which had been particularly illustrated by the occurrence; to wit, that the wrath of man would be made to praise God, and that the remainder of wrath he would restrain, ver. 10. VI. A call on all men to acknowledge God in a suitable manner, by bringing presents, and by standing in awe of him, vers. 11, 12.

1. *In Judah* is *God known.* That is, he has made himself known there in a special manner; he has evinced his watchful care over the city so as to demand a proper acknowledgment; he has manifested himself there as he has not elsewhere. It is true that God is known, or makes himself known everywhere; but it is also true that he does this in some places, and at some times, in a more marked and striking manner than he does in other places and at other times. The most clear and impressive displays of his character are among his own people,—in the church. ¶ *His name* is *great in Israel.* Among the people of Israel; or, among his own people. The meaning here is, that, by some act referred to in the psalm, he had so displayed his power and his mercy in favour of that people, as to make it proper that his name should be exalted or praised.

2. *In Salem also.* This was the ancient name for Jerusalem, and is evidently so used here. It continued to be given to the town until the time of David, when it was called *Jerusalem.* See Notes on Isa. i. 1. The word properly means *peace,* and is so rendered here by the Septuagint,—*ἐν εἰρήνῃ ὁ τόπος αὐτοῦ—his place is in peace.* There *may* have been an allusion here to that ancient signification of the name, as being more poetical, and as suggesting the fact that God had restored peace to the city and nation when invaded. ¶ *Is his tabernacle.* The *tent,* or sacred place where he is worshipped. Salem or Jerusalem was made the place of public worship, and the ark removed there by David, 2 Sam. vi. 17. ¶ *And his dwelling-place in Zion.* That is, on Mount Zion,—the portion of Jerusalem in which David built his own palace, and which he made the place of public worship. This remained so until the temple was built on Mount Moriah; see Notes on Ps. ii. 6; comp. Ps. ix. 11; xlviii. 12; lxv. 1.

3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow.* That is, in Salem, or near Salem. The language is such as would be used in reference to invaders, or to armies that came up to storm the city. The occasion is unknown; but the meaning is, that God drove the invading army back, and showed his power in defending the city. The phrase "the arrows of the bow," is literally, *the lightnings of the bow,*—the word rendered *arrows* meaning properly *flame;* and then, *lightning.* The idea is, that the arrows sped from the bow with the rapidity of lightning. ¶ *The shield.* Used for defence in war. See Ps. v. 12; xxxiii. 20; comp. Notes on Eph. vi. 16. ¶ *And the sword.* That is, he disarmed his enemies, or made them as powerless *as if* their swords were broken. ¶ *And the battle.* He broke the force of the battle; the strength of the armies drawn up for conflict.

4. *Thou* art *more glorious* and *excellent.* The word rendered *glorious*

excellent than the mountains of prey.

5 The stout-hearted [w] are spoiled, they have slept [x] their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands.

6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse [y] are cast into a dead sleep.

7 Thou, [z] *even* thou, *art* to be feared; and who [a] may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

w Isa. xlvi. 12. *x* Jer. li. 39. *y* Zec. xii. 4. *z* Jer. x. 7. *a* Nahum i. 6.

—נָאוֹר, *naor*—is from the verb which means *to shine*, to give light, and the word would properly refer to a luminous or *shining* object—as the sun, the source of light. Hence it means *shining*, splendid, glorious; and it is thus applied to the Divine Being with reference to his perfections, being like light. Comp. 1 John i. 5. The word rendered *excellent*, means exalted, noble, great. These words are applied here to God from the manifestation of his perfections in the case referred to. ¶ *Than the mountains of prey.* The word *prey* as employed here—טֶרֶף, *tereph*—means that which is obtained by hunting; and then, plunder. It is usually applied to the food of wild beasts, *beasts of prey.* Here it refers to the "mountains" considered as the abode or stronghold of robbers and banditti, from whence they sally forth in search of plunder. These mountains, in their heights, their rocks, their fastnesses, furnished safe places of retreat for robbers, and hence they became emblems of power. It is not improbable that the hordes referred to in the psalm had their abodes in such mountains, and hence the psalmist says that God who made those mountains and hills was superior to them in strength and power.

5. *The stout-hearted are spoiled.* The valiant men, the men who came so confidently to the invasion. The word *spoiled* here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, means *plundered*, not (as the word is now used) *corrupted.* See Notes on Col. ii. 8. ¶ *They have slept their sleep.* They are dead; they have slept their last sleep. Death, in the Scriptures, as in all other writings, is often compared with sleep. ¶ *And none of the men of might.* The men who came forth for purposes of war and conquest. ¶ *Have found their hands.* The Septuagint renders this, "Have found nothing in their hands;" that is, they have obtained no plunder. Luther renders it, "And all warriors must suffer their hands to fall." De Wette, "Have lost their hands." The idea seems to be, that they had lost the use of their hands; that is, that they had no use for them, or did not find them of any use. They could not employ them for the purpose for which they were intended, but were suddenly stricken down.

6. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob.* At thy word; thy bidding; or, when God rebuked them for their attempt to attack the city. The idea is, that they were discomfited by a *word* spoken by God. ¶ *Both the chariot and horse*, etc. The Septuagint renders this, "They who are mounted on horses." The word rendered *chariot* here—רֶכֶב *recheb*—may mean *riders, cavalry*, as well as chariot. See Notes on Isa. xxi. 7. Hence there would be less incongruity in the Hebrew than in our translation, where it is said that the *chariots* have fallen into a deep sleep. The idea may be either that horsemen and horses had fallen into a deep slumber, or that the rumbling of the chariot-wheels had ceased, and that there was a profound silence, *like* a deep sleep.

7. *Thou*, even *thou*, art *to be feared.* To be had in reverence or veneration. The repetition of the word "*thou*" is emphatic, as if the mind paused at the mention of God, and remained in a state of reverence, repeating the thought. The particular *reason* suggested here why God should be had

8 Thou [b] didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still,

9 When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

10 Surely the wrath of man [c] shall praise thee: the remainder [d] of wrath shalt thou restrain.

[b] Ex. xix. 10, etc. [c] Dan. iii. 19, 28. [d] Ps. lxv. 7.

in reverence, was the display of his power in overthrowing by a word the mighty hosts that had come against the holy city. ¶ *And who may stand in thy sight.* Who can stand before thee?—implying that no one had the power to do it. ¶ *When once thou art angry.* If such armies have been overcome suddenly by thy might, then what power is there which could successfully resist thee?

8. *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven.* It seemed to come from heaven; it was manifestly from thee. The overthrow of these enemies of thy people was a manifest judgment from thee, and should be so regarded. ¶ *The earth feared.* The world itself seemed to hear the voice of God, and to stand in awe. ¶ *And was still.* It seemed to be profoundly attentive to what God said, and as if it reverently listened to his voice. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to represent the earth, —the hills, the mountains, the streams, the rivers, the plains,—as conscious of the presence of God; as either rejoicing or trembling at his voice. Comp. Ps. lxv. 12, 13; cxiv. 3–7; Hab. iii. 8–11.

9. *When God arose to judgment.* That is, when he came to overthrow and destroy the enemies of his people, as referred to in the former part of the psalm. ¶ *To save all the meek of the earth.* Of the land,—to wit, the land of Judea; or, to save his people when in affliction. The word *meek*, which with us usually means those who are forbearing under injuries, means here the humble, the afflicted, the crushed, the oppressed.

10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.* It shall be the *occasion* of praise; or, honour shall accrue to thee from it, *as if* it were employed in thy praise, and *as if* it were voluntarily engaged in promoting thy glory. The deliverance of the people by the direct interposition of God in the case referred to in the psalm, the sudden and entire overthrow of the invading forces by his power, led to this reflection. The overruling power of God was displayed. The "wrath" of the invading host had given *occasion* for this manifestation of the Divine perfections; or, in other words, his character would *not* have been displayed in this manner if it had not been for these wicked purposes of men. It is not that there was anything *in* the wrath itself, or *in* their plans or intentions, that was in itself *adapted* to honour God; but that it was overruled by him, so that he took *occasion* from it to display his own character. The wicked conduct of a child is an *occasion* for the display of the just character and the wise administration of a parent; the act of a pirate, a rebel, a murderer, furnishes an *occasion* for the display of the just principles of law, and the stability and power of a government. In like manner, the sins of the wicked are made an *occasion* for the display of the Divine perfections in maintaining law; in the administering of justice; in preserving order. But there is another sense, also, in which the wrath of man is made the occasion for glorifying God. It is, that since there *is* such wrath, or since there *are* such wicked purposes, God makes *use* of that wrath, or of those wicked purposes, as he does of the powers of nature—of pestilence, disease, and storms, as instruments to accomplish his own designs, or to bring about great results. Thus he made use of the treasonable purpose of Judas, and the mad passions and the angry feelings of the Jews, in bringing about the work of redemption by the death

of his Son; thus he made use of the purposes of Sennacherib in order to punish his own people (see Notes on Isa. x. 5-7); thus he employed Cyrus to "execute his counsel" (Isa. xlvi. 10); and thus he made use of the wrath evinced in persecuting the church to secure its permanent establishment in the world. Whether these things could be accomplished *without* that wrath, is a question which is too high for man to determine. It is certain, also, that the fact that God overrules the wrath of men does not justify that wrath. The purposes of men are, like the pestilence and the storm, what they are in themselves;—and the nature of their conduct is not affected by any use that God may make of it. Men must be judged according to their own deeds, not for what God does through their wickedness. ¶ *The remainder of wrath.* The word *remainder* here — שְׁאֵרִית, *sheairith* —means properly *part;* what remains, especially after a defeat or slaughter,—the *survivors* of a battle, Jer. xi. 23; xliv. 14; Mic. vii. 18; Zeph. ii. 7. Gesenius renders it here (*Lex.*) "extreme wrath,"—retained even in extremity. The Septuagint, *ἐγκατάλειμμα—the things which are left.* So the Vulgate, *reliquiæ.* Luther, "When men rage against thee, thou turnest it to honour; and when they rage yet more, thou art yet prepared." Venema supposes that the meaning is *the whole wrath.* As in Arabic the word used here means *wholeness,* or the whole of anything; and according to this, the idea would be that it was not merely wrath *in general,* or *in a general sense,* that would be made use of, but *all that there was in wrath;* it would *all* be made use of in advancing the Divine purposes. The allusion seems to be to something that had been laid up in a magazine—as provision or arms, when the soldier went forth to war —which he would make use of if necessary, so that *all* might be ultimately consumed or employed. The control of God was over *this* as well as over that which was actually employed; he could overrule that which was employed. He could restrain men from at all using this that was kept in reserve. The idea seems to be that all the "wrath" which is *manifested* among men would be made to praise God, or would be overruled for his glory,—and *all* which would *not* contribute to this end he would keep back, he would check; he would prevent its being put forth,—so that *all* should be under his control, and *all* disposed of as he should will. There was nothing in the heart or the purposes of man that was beyond *his* jurisdiction or control; man could do nothing in his wrathful plans that God could not dispose of in his own way, and for his own honour. ¶ *Shalt thou restrain.* The word here used— חָגַר, *hhagar*—means literally to bind around; to gird; to gird up, as of a garment or sword that is girded on, 1 Sam. xvii. 39; xxv. 13; Ps. xlv. 3; or sackcloth, Isa. xv. 3; Jer. xlix. 3. The Septuagint renders this, "and the remainder of wrath *shall make a feast to thee,*"—*ἑορτάσει σοι*—that is, it shall praise or honour thee as in a festival. So the Vulgate. Prof. Alexander renders it, "Shalt thou gird about thee;" that is, God would gird it on as a sword, and would make use of it as a weapon for executing his own purposes. So De Wette, "And with the last wrath thou shalt gird thyself." Others render it, "Thou restrainest the remainder of *thy* wrath"—that is, punishment— "when the wrath of man will not promote the knowledge of thyself." It seems to me, however, that our translators have expressed the exact idea in the psalm; and the meaning is, that the *whole* of the wrath of man is under the control of God, and that whatever there is, or would be, in the manifestation of that wrath, or in carrying out the purposes of the heart, which could *not,* in the circumstances, be made to promote his glory, or which would do injury, he

11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents [1] unto him that ought to be feared.

[1] *to fear.*

12 He [e] shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is* terrible to the kings of the earth.

[e] Ps. ii. 5, 10.

would check and restrain. He would suffer it to proceed no further than he chose, and would make it certain that there should be *no* exhibition of wrathful feelings on the part of man which would not, in some way, be made to promote his honour, and to advance his own great purposes. He has absolute control over the passions of men, as he has over the pestilence, over earthquakes, and over storms, and can make all tributary to his glory, and executioners of his will.

11. *Vow, and pay unto the* LORD *your God.* That is, Pay your vows, or sacredly observe them. On the word *vow*, see Notes on Ps. xxii. 25. Comp. Ps. l. 14; lvi. 12; lxvi. 13. The word refers to a voluntary promise made to God. ¶ *Let all that be round about him.* All that worship him, or that profess to honour him. ¶ *Bring presents.* Bring gifts or offerings; things expressive of gratitude and homage. See Notes on Ps. xlv. 12. Comp. Notes on Isa. xvi. 1; xviii. 7; lx. 5; *et seq.* ¶ *Unto him that ought to be feared.* Marg., *to fear.* The meaning would be well expressed by the word *dread;*—"to the Dread One." It was not to inspire fear that the presents were to be brought; but they were to be brought to One who had shown that he was the proper object of dread or reverence.

12. *He shall cut off the spirit of princes.* That is, He will cut down their pride; he will break them down. Luther renders it, "He shall take away the wrath of princes." The allusion is to what he had done as celebrated in this psalm. He had shown that he could rebuke the pride and self-confidence of kings, and could bring them low at his feet. ¶ He is *terrible to the kings of the earth.* When they are arrayed against him. (1) They are wholly under his control. (2) He can defeat their plans. (3) He can check them when he pleases. (4) He can, and will, make their plans—even their wrath—the means of promoting or carrying out his own purposes. (5) He will allow them to proceed no further in their plans of evil than he can make subservient to the furtherance of his own. (6) He can cut down the most mighty of them at his pleasure, and destroy them for ever.

PSALM LXXVII.

For the meaning of the title to this psalm, see Notes on the title to Ps. xxxix. It purports, like the preceding ones, to be a psalm of Asaph. See Notes in the title to Ps. lxxiii. Nothing is known, or can now be ascertained, of the occasion on which the psalm was composed. It is not absolutely certain whether it refers to some public calamity, and is designed to express the feelings of a pious Hebrew, as of the psalmist himself (Rosenmüller), or some other Jew (De Wette), in view of such a public calamity; or whether it is designed to represent the "complaint of the church in view of her calamity and desertion" (Prof. Alexander); or whether it is the statement of the private and personal experience of the author of the psalm. To me it seems that the latter is the most probable supposition, and that, in this respect, it accords with the purport and design of Ps. lxxiii., which is by the same author. It is an interesting statement of what passed through the mind of the author, and of what may, therefore, pass through the mind of any pious person, in regard to the Divine dealings. The psalm was evidently composed in a time of affliction, and the thoughts which gave the author so much trouble, and which he endeavoured to calm down, were such as were suggested *by* affliction;—by the fact that God *seemed* to have forsaken him, and that he had forgotten to be gracious.

PSALM LXXVII.

To the chief Musician, to *f* Jeduthun.
A Psalm of [1] Asaph.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my [2] sore ran

f Ps. lxii., *title*. [1] Or, *for*. [2] *hand*.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. A general statement of the author that he had cried to God, and that he had been heard, ver. 1. This, although it is in the beginning of the psalm, is clearly designed to be a general expression of his experience in the case *as recorded in the psalm*, or as the result of the conflict through which he had passed.

II. A statement of his affliction, and of the exercises of his mind *in* his affliction, vers. 2–9.

(1) The statement of the affliction, ver. 2.

(2) In that affliction he was troubled in mind, or he had painful ideas in regard to God. He could not reconcile his sufferings with such views as he desired to cherish of God, ver. 3.

(3) His meditations, and perhaps the pain of disease, kept him awake, and he was unable to rest. The ordinary time of repose furnished no relief, ver. 4.

(4) He recalled the past; he looked over the dealings of God with men in former times; he summoned up his own reflections in times past, and especially the time when he *could* praise God in trouble, recalling his "*song in the night*"—but in vain, vers. 5, 6.

(5) The result was that he had most painful thoughts in regard to God, *as if* he had forgotten to be gracious, and had cast him off for ever, and would be favourable no more, vers. 7–9.

III. His self-reproach; his recalling himself to a proper state of feeling; his purpose to think of the dealings of God with his people, and to examine them more closely, vers. 10–12. He saw that the course of thought which he had indulged in was wrong, and was satisfied that it was an "infirmity,"—that it was to be traced to his own weakness,—and that he ought to take different views of God.

IV. The result of all;—the things which comforted him in his troubles, and which enabled him at last to put his calm trust in God, vers. 13–20.

He refers

(1) To the fact that God is great, and that he could not hope to be able to comprehend him, vers. 13, 14.

(2) To the fact that God had redeemed his people by surprising manifestations of power, showing that he was faithful, and that he was able to deliver from the deepest distresses, vers. 15–18.

(3) To the fact that the way of God was in the sea, or in great waters, and that we cannot expect to be able to comprehend him, ver. 19.

(4) To the fact that God *had* led his flock in ancient times amid scenes of danger and of trial, ver. 20.

By all this his mind was comforted, and his soul was made calm. God heard his prayer, and gave him peace.

1. *I cried unto God with my voice.* That is, he cried or prayed audibly. It was not mere mental prayer. See Notes on Ps. iii. 4. ¶ Even *unto God with my voice.* The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry. Comp. Notes on 2 Cor. xii. 8. ¶ *And he gave ear unto me.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1; xvii. 6.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* Comp. Notes on Ps. l. 15. This trouble *may* have been either mental or bodily; that is, it may have arisen from some form of disease, or it may have been that which sprang from difficulties in regard to the Divine character, government, and dealings. That it *assumed* the latter form, even if it had its beginning in the former, is apparent from the following verses. Whether it was connected with any form of bodily disease must be determined by the proper interpretation of the next

in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit *g* was overwhelmed. Selah.

g Ps. cxliii. 4, 5; Lam. iii. 17, etc.

clause in this verse. ¶ *My sore ran in the night.* Marg., *My hand.* It is evident that our translators supposed that there was some bodily disease—some running sore—which was the cause of his trouble. Hence they so rendered the Hebrew word. But it is now generally agreed that this is without authority. The Hebrew word is *hand* — יָד, *yad*—a word which is never used in the sense of sore or wound. The Septuagint renders it, "my hands are before him." The Vulgate renders it in the same manner. Luther, "My hand is stretched out at night." De Wette, "My hand is stretched out at night unwearied." The word which is rendered in our version *ran* — נָגַר, *nagar*—means *to flow;* and, in Niphil, to be poured out, and then, *to be stretched out;* which is evidently its meaning here. The idea is, that his hand was stretched out in earnest supplication, and that this continued in the night when these troubles came most upon him. See vers. 4, 6. In his painful meditations in the night-watches,—in thinking on God and his ways, as he lay upon his bed, he stretched out his hand in fervent prayer to God. ¶ *And ceased not.* The word here used—פָּוַג, *pug*—means properly to be cold; then, to be torpid, sluggish, slack. Here it means that the hand did not become weary; it did not fall from exhaustion; or, in other words, that he did not give over praying through weariness or exhaustion. ¶ *My soul refused to be comforted.* I resisted all the suggestions that came to my own mind, that *might* have comforted me. My heart was so melancholy and downcast; my spirits were so crushed; my mind was so dark; I had become so *morbid,* that I loved to cherish these thoughts. I chose to dwell on them. They had obtained possession of me, and I could not let them go. There was nothing that my own mind could suggest, there was nothing that occurred to me, that would relieve the difficulty or restore peace to my soul. These sad and gloomy thoughts filled all my soul, and left no room for thoughts of consolation and peace. A truly pious man *may,* therefore, get into a state of mind—a sad, dispirited, melancholy, morbid state—in which nothing that can be said to him, nothing that will occur to himself, will give him comfort and peace. Comp. Jer. xxxi. 15.

3. *I remembered God.* That is, I thought on God; I thought on his character, his government, and his dealings; I thought on the mysteries — the incomprehensible things—the apparently unequal, unjust, and partial doings—of his administration. It is evident from the whole tenour of the psalm that these were the things which occupied his attention. He dwelt on them till his whole soul became sad; till his spirit became so overwhelmed that he could not find words in which to utter his thoughts. ¶ *And was troubled.* The Septuagint renders this, ἐνφράνθην—*I was rejoiced* or *delighted.* So the Vulgate. Luther renders it, "When I am troubled, then I think on God." Our translation, however, has probably given the true idea; and *in* that has expressed (*a*) what often occurs in the case of even a good man,—that by dwelling on the dark and incomprehensible things of the Divine administration, the soul becomes sad and troubled to an extent bordering on murmuring, complaint, and rebellion; and may also serve to illustrate (*b*) what often happens in the mind of a sinner,—that he delights to dwell on these things in the Divine administration: (1) as most in accordance with what he *desires* to think about God, or with the views which he *wishes* to cherish of him;

4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

5 I have considered [h] the days of old, the years of ancient times.

[h] Deut. xxxii. 7; Isa. lxiii. 11.

and (2) as justifying himself in his rebellion against God, and his refusal to submit to him,—for if God *is* unjust, partial, and severe, the sinner is right; such a Being would be unworthy of trust and confidence; he *ought* to be opposed, and his claims *ought* to be resisted. ¶ *I complained.* Or rather, *I mused* or *meditated.* The word here used does not necessarily mean to complain. It is sometimes used in that sense, but its proper and common signification is to meditate. See Ps. cxix. 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148. ¶ *And my spirit was overwhelmed.* With the result of my own reflections. That is, *I* was amazed or confounded by the thoughts that came in upon me.

4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking.* Literally, "Thou holdest the watchings of my eyes." Gesenius (*Lex.*) translates the Hebrew word rendered *waking*, "eyelids." Probably that is the true idea. The eyelids are the watchers or guardians of the eyes. In danger, and in sleep, they close. Here the idea is, that God *held* them so that they did not close. He overcame the natural tendency of the eye to shut. In other words, the psalmist was kept awake; he could not sleep. This he traces to God. The idea is, that God so kept himself before his mind — that such ideas occurred to him in regard to God—that he could not sleep. ¶ *I am so troubled.* With sad and dark views of God;—so troubled in endeavouring to understand his character and doings; in explaining his acts; in painful ideas that suggest themselves in regard to his justice, his goodness, his mercy. ¶ *That I cannot speak.* I am struck dumb. I know not what to say. I cannot find *anything* to say. He must have a heart singularly and happily free by nature from scepticism, or must have reflected little on the Divine administration, who has not had thoughts pass through his mind like these. As the psalmist was a good man, a pious man, it is of importance to remark, in view of his experience, that such reflections occur not only to the minds of *bad* men—of the profane—of sceptics—of infidel philosophers, but they come unbidden into the minds of good men, and often in a form which they cannot calm down. He who has never had such thoughts, happy as he may and should deem himself that he has *not* had them, has never known some of the deepest stirrings and workings of the human soul on the subject of religion, and is little qualified to sympathize with a spirit torn, crushed, agitated, as was that of the psalmist on these questions, or as Augustine and thousands of others have been in after-times. But let not a man conclude, *because* he has these thoughts, that therefore he cannot be a friend of God — a converted man. The wicked man invites them, cherishes them, and rejoices that he *can* find what seem to him to be reasons for indulging in such thoughts against God; the good man is pained; struggles against them; endeavours to banish them from his soul.

5. *I have considered the days of old.* Rather, "I *do* consider;" that is, "I think upon." This refers to his resolution in his perplexity and trouble; the method to which he resorted in examining the subject, and in endeavouring to allay his troubles. He resolved to look at the past. He asked what was the evidence which was furnished on the subject by the former dealings of God with himself and with mankind; what could be learned from those dealings in regard to the great and difficult questions which now so perplexed his mind. ¶ *The years of ancient times.* The records and remembrances of past ages. What is the testimony which the his-

6 I call to remembrance my song [i] in the night: I commune [k] with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent [l] search.

7 Will the Lord cast off for [m] ever? and will he be favourable no more?

[i] Ps. xlii. 8. [k] Ps. iv. 4. [l] Lam. iii. 40.

8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail [1] for evermore?

9 Hath God forgotten [n] to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

[m] Ps. lxxiv. 1; Lam. iii. 31, 32.
[1] *to generation and generation.* [n] Isa. xlix. 15.

tory of the world bears on this subject? Does it prove that God is worthy of confidence or not? Does it or does it not authorize and justify these painful thoughts which pass through the mind?

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* Comp. Notes on Job xxxv. 10; Ps. xlii. 8. The word here rendered *song* — נְגִינָתִי, *Neginah* — means properly the music of stringed instruments, Lam. v. 14; Isa. xxxviii. 20; then, a stringed instrument. It is the word which we have so often in the titles to the psalms (Ps. iv.; vi.; liv.; lv.; lxvii.; lxxvi.); and it is here used in the sense of song or psalm. The idea is, that there had been times in his life when, even in darkness and sorrow, he could sing; when he could find things for which to praise God; when he could find something that would cheer him; when he could take some bright views of God adapted to calm down his feelings, and to give peace to his soul. He recalls those times and scenes to his remembrance, with a desire to have those cheerful impressions renewed; and he asks himself what it *was* which then comforted and sustained him. He endeavours to bring those things back again; for if he found comfort *then*, he thinks that he might find comfort from the same considerations now. ¶ *I commune with mine own heart.* I think over the matter. See Notes on Ps. iv. 4. ¶ *And my spirit made diligent search.* In reference (*a*) to the grounds of my former support and comfort; and (*b*) in reference to the whole matter as it lies before me now.

7. *Will the Lord cast off for ever?* This was the subject, and the substance, of his inquiry:—whether it was a fair and just conclusion that God would show no mercy; would never be gracious again. Evidently the thought passed through his mind that this seemed to be the character of God; that things *looked* as if this were so; that it was difficult, if not impossible, to understand the Divine dealings otherwise;—and he asks whether this *was* a fair conclusion;—whether he *must* be constrained to believe that this was so. ¶ *And will he be favourable no more?* Will he no more show favour to men? Will he pardon and save no more of the race of mankind?

8. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?* The word rendered *clean gone* means to fail; to fail utterly. The idea is, Can it be that the compassion of God has become exhausted,—that no more mercy is to be shown to mankind,—that henceforth all is to be left to stern and severe justice? What would the world be if this were so! What must be the condition of mankind if mercy were no more to be shown to the race! ¶ *Doth* his *promise fail for evermore?* Marg., as in Heb., *to generation and generation.* The original Hebrew rendered *promise* means *word;* and the question is, whether it can be that what God has *spoken* is to be found false. Can we no longer rely on what he has *said?* All the hopes of mankind depend on that, and if that should fail, all prospect of salvation in regard to our race must be at an end.

9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* Has he *passed over* mercy in administering his government? Has he ceased to remember that man needs mercy? Has he forgotten that

10 And I said, This [o] *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High.

[o] Ps. xxxi. 22.

this is an attribute of his own nature? ¶ *Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* The original word here rendered *tender mercies* refers to the *bowels*, as the seat of compassion or mercy, in accordance with a usage common in Hebrew. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 6; Isa. xvi. 11; lxiii. 15. Comp. Luke i. 78 (in Greek); Phil. i. 8; ii. 1; 1 John iii. 17. We speak of the *heart* as the seat of affection and kindness. The Hebrews included the heart, but they used a more general word. The word rendered *shut up* means *closed;* and the question is whether his mercy was *closed*, or had *ceased* for ever. The psalmist concludes that if this were done, it must be as the result of *anger*—anger in view of the sins of men.

10. *And I said, This* is *my infirmity.* The meaning of this phrase is not, as would appear from our translation, that his reflections on the subject were to be traced to his weakness, or were a proof of weakness of mind, but that the subject overpowered him. This verse has been very variously rendered. The Septuagint and the Vulgate translate it, "And I said, now I begin; this is a change of the right hand of the Most High,"—with what meaning it is difficult to see. Luther renders it, "But yet I said, I must suffer this; the right hand of the Most High can change all;"—a beautiful sentiment, but probably not the idea in the original. The Hebrew means, "This makes me sick;" that is, "This distresses me; it afflicts me; it overwhelms me. Such reflections prostrate me, and I cannot bear up under them. I *must* seek relief. I *must* find it somewhere. I *must* take some view of this matter which will save me from these dreadful thoughts that overpower and crush the soul." Any deep mental emotion may have this effect, and it is not strange that such a result should be produced by the momentous thoughts suggested by religion, as it sometimes attends even the manifestation of the Divine mercy to the soul. Comp. Notes on Dan. x. 8, 9. The course of thought which the psalmist pursued, and in which he found relief, is stated in the following verses. It consisted of an attempt to obtain, from the remembrance of the Divine administration in past times, views of God which would lead to confidence in him. The views thus obtained, as will be seen, were two-fold: (*a*) That, as far as his dealings could be understood, God was worthy of confidence; and (*b*) That in the ways of God there are, and must be, many things which man cannot comprehend. ¶ But I will remember *the years of the right hand of the Most High.* That is, the years when God displayed his power; when he reached out his right hand; when he manifested his true character; when there was a proper exhibition to the world of what he is, and of the true principles of his administration. The words "*But I will remember*" are not in the original, though, as they occur in the following verse, they are not improperly supplied by the translators. The original, however, is more striking and emphatic:—"This makes me sick!—The years of the right hand of the Most High!" The history of those years occurred to his mind. They rose to his view suddenly in his sorrow. They came before him in such a form and manner that he felt they should be inquired into. Their history should be examined. In that history—in those remembered years—relief *might* be found. It was natural to look there *for* relief. He instinctively turned, therefore, to examine the records of those years, and to inquire what testimony they bore in regard to God; what there might be in them that would give relief to a troubled heart.

11 I will remember the works [p] of the LORD; surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.
13 Thy way, O God, *is* [q] in the sanctuary: who [r] *is so* great a God as *our* God!

p Ps. cxi. 4. q Ps. lxviii. 24. r Ex. xv. 11, etc.

11. *I will remember the works of the* LORD. That is, I will call them to remembrance, or I will reflect on them. I will look to what God has *done*, that I may learn his true character, or that I may see what is the proper interpretation to be put on his doings in respect to the question whether he is righteous or not; whether it is proper to put confidence in him or not. Or, in other words, I will examine those doings to see if I cannot find in them something to calm down my feelings; to remove my despondency; and to give me cheerful views of God. ¶ *Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.* Thy wonderful dealings with mankind; those acts which thou hast performed which are fitted to excite amazement and wonder.

12. *I will meditate also of all thy work.* That is, with a view to learn thy real character; to see whether I am to be constrained by painful facts to cherish the thoughts which have given me such trouble, or whether I may not find reasons for cherishing more cheerful views of God. ¶ *And talk of thy doings.* Or rather, "I will *muse* on thy doings"—for so the Hebrew word signifies. It is not conversation with others to which he refers; it is meditation—musing—calm contemplation — thoughtful meditation. He designed to reflect on the doings of God, and to ask what was the proper interpretation to be put on them in regard to his character. Thus we must, and may, judge of God, as we judge of our fellow-men. We may, we must, inquire what is the proper interpretation to be put on the events which occur under his administration, and form our opinions accordingly. The result of the psalmist's reflections is stated in the following verses.

13. *Thy way, O God,* is *in the sanctuary.* Luther renders this, "O God, thy way is holy." Prof. Alexander, "O God, in holiness is thy way." De Wette, "O God, holy is thy way." The word rendered *sanctuary*—קֹדֶשׁ, *kodesh*—means properly *holiness.* It is not the same word which in Ps. lxxiii. 17 is rendered *sanctuary*—מִקְדָּשׁ, *mikdosh.* The word here employed, however, *may* mean a holy place, a sanctuary, as the tabernacle (Ex. xxviii. 43; xxix. 30), or the temple (1 Kings viii. 8; 2 Chron. xxix. 7). In this passage the word is ambiguous. It means either that the way of God is holy, or in holiness; or, that it is in the sanctuary, or holy place. If the former, it is a statement of the result to which the psalmist came in regard to the Divine character, from a contemplation of his doings. If the latter, it means that the way of God —the true principles of the Divine administration—are to be learned in the place where he is worshipped, and from the principles which are there set forth. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxiii. 17. It seems to me that the former is the correct interpretation, as it accords better with the scope of the passage. ¶ *Who* is so *great a God as* our *God!* In greatness no one can be compared with him. He is supreme over all. This is the first reflection of the psalmist in regard to God,—that he is great; that he is superior to all other beings; that no one can be compared with him. The evident *inference* from this in the mind of the psalmist, as bearing on the subject of his inquiry, is, that *it is to be expected* that there will be things in his administration which man cannot hope to understand; that a rash and sudden judgment should not be formed in regard to him from

14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

16 The waters [s] saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled.

17 The clouds [1] poured out water; the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.

[s] Hab. iii. 8, etc.

[1] *were poured forth with water.*

his doings; that men should wait for the developments of his plans; that he should not be condemned because there are things which we cannot comprehend, or which *seem* to be inconsistent with goodness. This is a consideration which ought always to influence us in our views of God and his government.

14. *Thou* art *the God that doest wonders.* It is, it must be, the characteristic of God, the true God, to do *wonderful things;* things which are fitted to produce amazement, and which we can little hope to be able to understand. Our judgment of God, therefore, should not be hasty and rash, but calm and deliberate. ¶ *Thou hast declared thy strength among the people.* Thou hast manifested thy greatness in thy dealings with the people. The word *people* here refers not peculiarly to the Hebrew people, but to the *nations*—the people of the world at large. On a wide scale, and among all nations, God had done that which was fitted to excite wonder, and which men were little qualified as yet to comprehend. No one can judge aright of what another has done unless he can take in the whole subject, and see it as he does who performs the act,—unless he understands all the causes, the motives, the results near and remote,—unless he sees the necessity of the act,—unless he sees what would have been the consequences if it had *not* been done; for in that which is *unknown* to us, and which lies beyond the range of our vision, there *may be* full and sufficient reasons for what has been done, and an explanation *may be* found there which would remove all the difficulty.

15. *Thou hast with* thine *arm.* That is, with strength or power, the arm being a symbol of strength. Ex. vi. 6; xv. 16; Ps. x. 15. ¶ *Redeemed thy people.* Thou didst rescue or deliver them from Egyptian bondage. See Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. ¶ *The sons of Jacob and Joseph.* The descendants of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob is mentioned because he was the ancestor of the twelve tribes; Joseph, because he was conspicuous or eminent among the sons of Jacob, and particularly because he acted so important a part in the affairs of Egypt, from whose dominion they were redeemed.

16. *The waters saw thee,* etc. The waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan. There is great sublimity in this expression; in representing the waters as conscious of the presence of God, and as fleeing in consternation at his presence. Comp. Rev. xx. 11; Hab. iii. 10, 11. ¶ *They were afraid.* On the word here used—חוּל, *hhul*—see Notes on Ps. x. 5; lv. 4. It may mean here to tremble or quake, as in pain (Deut. ii. 25; Joel ii. 6). Alarm, distress, anguish, came over the waters at the presence of God; and they trembled, and fled. ¶ *The depths also were troubled.* The deep waters, or the waters *in* the depths. It was not a ripple on the surface; but the very depths—the usually calm and undisturbed waters that lie below the surface—were heaved into commotion at the Divine presence.

17. *The clouds poured out water.* Marg., *The clouds were poured forth with water.* The translation in the text is the more correct. This is a description of a storm; but to what particular storm in history does not appear. It was evidently some ex-

18 The voice *t* of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

19 Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

t 2 Sam. xxii. 14.

hibition of the Divine greatness and power in delivering the children of Israel, and may have referred to the extraordinary manifestation of God at Mount Sinai, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and tempests. Exod. xix. 16. For a general description of a storm, as illustrating this passage, see Notes on Job xxxvi. 26–33; xxxvii. 1–5; and Ps. xxix. ¶ *The skies sent out a sound.* The voice of thunder, which seems to come from the sky. ¶ *Thine arrows also.* The lightnings,—compared with burning or ignited arrows. Such arrows were anciently used in war. They were bound round with rags, and dipped in some combustible substance—as turpentine—and shot into houses, corn-fields, haystacks, or towns, for the purpose of setting them on fire. It was not unnatural to compare the rapid lightnings with such blazing arrows. ¶ *Went abroad.* They moved rapidly in all directions.

18. *The voice of thy thunder* was *in the heaven.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxix. The word rendered *heaven* here —גַּלְגַּל, *galgal*—means properly *a wheel*, as of a chariot, Isa. v. 28; Ezek. x. 2, 6; xxiii. 24; xxvi. 10. Then it means a *whirlwind*, as that which rolls along, Ezek. x. 13. Then it is used to denote chaff or stubble, as driven along before a whirlwind, Ps. lxxxiii. 13; Isa. xvii. 13. It is never used to denote heaven. It means here, undoubtedly, the whirlwind; and the idea is, that in the ragings of the storm, or of the whirlwind, the voice of God was heard,—the deep bellowing thunder,—as if God spake to men. ¶ *The lightnings lightened the world.* The whole earth seemed to be in a blaze. ¶ *The earth trembled and shook.* See Notes on Ps. xxix.

19. *Thy way* is *in the sea.* Probably the literal meaning here is, that God had shown his power and faithfulness in the sea (that is, the Red Sea), in delivering his people; it was there that his true character was seen, as possessing almighty power, and as being able to deliver his people. But this seems to have *suggested*, also, another idea,—that the ways of God, in his providential dealings, were *like* walking through the sea, where no permanent track would be made, where the waves would close on the path, and where it would be impossible by any footprints to ascertain the way which he had taken. So in regard to his doings and his plans. There is nothing by which man can determine in regard to them. There are no traces by which he can follow out the Divine designs,— as none can follow one whose path is through the trackless waters. The subject is beyond man's reach, and there should be no rash or harsh judgment of the Almighty. ¶ *And thy path in the great waters.* The *additional* idea here may be, that the ways or plans of God are *vast*—like the ocean. Even in shallow waters, when one wades through them, the path closes at once, and the way cannot be traced; but God's goings are like those of one who should move through the great ocean—over a boundless sea — where none could hope to follow him. ¶ *And thy footsteps are not known.* The word rendered *footsteps* means properly the print made by the *heel*, and the print made by the foot. The idea here is, that there are no traces in regard to many of the dealings of God, which appear most incomprehensible to us, and which trouble us most, as there can be no footprints left in the waters. We should not venture, therefore, to sit in judgment on the doings of God, or presume that we can understand them.

20 Thou [u] leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

[u] Isa. lxiii. 11.

20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* This satisfied and comforted the mind of the psalmist. God had never forsaken his people. He had shown himself faithful in his dealings with them. He had acted the part of a good shepherd. In all the dangers of their way; in their perilous journey through the wilderness; amidst foes, privations, and troubles,—rocks, sands, storms, tempests,—when surrounded by enemies, and when their camp was infested with poisonous serpents,—God had shown himself able to protect his people, and had been faithful to all his promises and covenant-engagements. Looking back to this period of their history, the psalmist saw that there *was* abundant reason for confiding in God, and that the mind *should* repose on him calmly amid all that was dark and mysterious in his dealings. In view of the past, the mind ought to be calm; encouraged by the past, however incomprehensible may be God's doings, men may come to him, and entrust all their interests to him with the confident assurance that their salvation will be secure, and that all which seems dark and mysterious in the dealings of God will yet be made clear.

PSALM LXXVIII.

This is one of the psalms ascribed to Asaph. See Introd. to Psalm lxxiii. If, as is likely, it was composed at a later period than the time of David, the word *Asaph* must be taken as a general term denoting the successor in the family of Asaph, who presided over the music of the sanctuary. On the word *Maschil* in the title, see Notes on the title to Ps. xxxii.

The *time* when the psalm was composed cannot now be ascertained with any certainty. It was evidently written, however, *after* the revolt of the ten tribes, and the establishment of the sovereignty in the tribe of Judah; that is, after the time of David and Solomon. This is apparent from verse 9, and verse 67, where "Ephraim," the chief of the ten tribes, is referred to in distinction from "Judah."

The *design* of the psalm is, evidently, to vindicate the fact that Ephraim had been rejected, and that Judah had been chosen to be the head of the nation. The *reason* of this was found in the conduct of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, in revolting from God, and in forgetting the Divine mercy and compassion shown to the Hebrew people in former days. See vers. 9-11, 67, 68.

The *argument* in the psalm is the following:—

I. A call on all the people, addressed to them by the king or the ruler, to attend to the instructions of former times,—the lessons which it was of importance to transmit to future generations, vers. 1-4.

II. God had established a general law which he had designed for *all* the people, or which he intended should be the law of the nation as such,—that *all* the people might set their hope in God, or be worshippers of Him as the only true God, and that they might all be *one* people, vers. 5-8.

III. Ephraim—the most powerful of the ten tribes, and their head and representative—had been guilty of disregarding that law, and had refused to come to the common defence of the nation, vers. 9-11.

IV. The wickedness of this rebellion is shown by the great favours which, in its former history, God had shown to the nation as such, including these very tribes, vers. 12-66.

V. The reason is stated, founded on their apostasy, why God had rejected Ephraim, and why he had chosen Judah, and made Zion the capital of the nation, instead of selecting a place within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim for that purpose, vers. 67, 68.

VI. The fact is declared that David had been chosen to rule over the people; that he had been taken from humble life, and made the ruler of the nation, and that the line of the sovereignty had been settled in him, vers. 69-72.

PSALM LXXVIII.

Maschil *v* of Asaph.

GIVE *w* ear, O my people, *to* my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a *x* parable; I will utter dark sayings of old;

v Ps. lxxiv., *title*. *w* Isa. li. 4.

3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

4 We *y* will not hide *them* from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

x Matt. xiii. 13, 35. *y* Ex. xiii. 8, 14.

1. *Give ear, O my people.* This is not an address of God, but an address of the king or ruler of the people, calling their attention to an important subject; to wit, his right to rule over them, or showing why the power had been vested in him. ¶ To *my law.* The word *law* here seems to mean *what he would say*, as if what *he* should choose to say would have the force and authority of *law*. What follows is not exactly *law* in the sense that it was a rule to be obeyed; but it is something that is *authoritatively said*, and should have the force of law. ¶ *Incline your ears*, etc. Be attentive. What is to be said is worthy of your particular regard. Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 1.

2. *I will open my mouth in a parable.* See Notes on Ps. xlix. 4. The word *parable* here means a statement by analogy or comparison; that is, he would bring out what he had to say by a course of reasoning founded on an analogy drawn from the ancient history of the people. ¶ *I will utter dark sayings of old.* Of ancient times; that is, maxims, or sententious thoughts, which had come down from past times, and which embodied the results of ancient observation and reflection. Comp. Ps. xlix. 4, where the word rendered *dark sayings* is explained. He would bring out, and apply, to the present case, the maxims of ancient wisdom.

3. *Which we have heard and known.* Which have been communicated to us as certain truth. ¶ *And our fathers have told us.* That is, we have heard and known them *by* their telling us; or, this is the means by which we have known them. They have come down to us by tradition from ancient times.

4. *We will not hide* them *from their children.* From their descendants, however remote. We of this generation will be faithful in handing down these truths to future times. We stand between past generations and the generations to come. We are entrusted by those who have gone before us with great and important truths; truths to be preserved and transmitted in their purity to future ages. That trust committed to us we will faithfully discharge. These truths shall not suffer in passing from us to them. They shall not be stayed in their progress; they shall not be corrupted or impaired. This is the duty of each successive generation in the world, receiving, as a trust, from past generations, the result of their thoughts, their experience, their wisdom, their inventions, their arts, their sciences, and the records of their doings, to hand these down unimpaired to future ages, combined with all that they may themselves invent or discover which may be of use or advantage to the generations following. ¶ *Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the* LORD. The *reasons* why he should be praised, as resulting from his past doings,—and the *ways* in which it should be done. We will keep up, and transmit to future times, the pure institutions of religion. ¶ *And his strength.* The records of his power. ¶ *And his wonderful works that he hath done.* In the history of his people, and in his many and varied interpositions in their behalf.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law [z] in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children;

6 That [a] the generation to come might know *them, even* the children *which* should be born, *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:

7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

8 And [b] might not be as their

[z] Deut. vi. 7; xi. 19. [a] Ps. cii. 18. [b] Ez. xx. 18.

5. *For he established a testimony in Jacob.* He ordained or appointed that which would be for a *witness* for him; that which would bear testimony to his character and perfections; that which would serve to remind them of what he was, and of his authority over them. Any law or ordinance of God is thus a standing and permanent *witness* in regard to his character as showing what he is. ¶ *And appointed a law in Israel.* That is, He gave law to Israel, or to the Hebrew people. Their laws were not human enactments, but were the appointments of God. ¶ *Which he commanded our fathers,* etc. He made it a law of the land that these testimonies should be preserved and faithfully transmitted to future times. See Deut. iv. 9; vi. 7; xi. 19. They were not given for themselves only, but for the benefit of distant generations also.

6. *That the generation to come might know* them, etc. That men in future times might enjoy the benefit of them as their fathers had done, and that they should then send them forward to those who were to succeed them. ¶ Who *should arise and declare* them *to their children.* Who, as they appeared on the stage of life, should receive the trust, and send it onward to future ages. Thus the world makes progress; thus one age starts where the previous one left off; thus it enters on its own career with the advantage of all the toils, the sacrifices, the happy thoughts, the inventions of all past times. It is designed that the world *shall* thus grow wiser and better as it advances; and that future generations shall be enriched with all that was worth preserving in the experience of the past. See Notes on Ps. lxxi. 18.

7. *That they might set their hope in God.* That they might place confidence in God; that they might maintain their allegiance to him. The object was to give such exhibitions of his character and government as to inspire just *confidence* in him, or to lead men to trust in him; and not to trust in idols and false gods. All the laws which God has ordained are such as are fitted to inspire confidence in him as a just and righteous ruler; and all his dealings with mankind, when they are properly—that is, *really*—understood, will be found to be adapted to the same end. ¶ *And not forget the works of God.* His doings. The word here does not refer to his "works" considered as the works of creation, or the material universe, but to his *acts*—to what he has *done* in administering his government over mankind. ¶ *But keep his commandments.* That by contemplating his doings, by understanding the design of his administration, they might be led to keep his commandments. The purpose was that they might *see* such wisdom, justice, equity, and goodness in his administration, that they would be *led* to keep laws so fitted to promote the welfare of mankind. If men saw all the reasons of the Divine dealings, or fully understood them, nothing more would be necessary to secure universal confidence in God and in his government.

8. *And might not be as their fathers.* Their ancestors, particularly in the wilderness, as they passed

fathers, a stubborn and rebellious [c] generation; a generation *that* [1] set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

9 The children of Ephraim *being* armed, *and* [2] carrying bows, turned [d] back in the day of battle.

10 They [e] kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

11 And forgat [f] his works, and

[c] Ez. ii. 3—8.
[1] *prepared not their heart*, 2 Chron. xx. 33.
[2] *throwing forth.*
[d] Hos. vii. 11.
[e] Hos. vi. 4, 7.
[f] Ps. cvi. 13.

through it to the promised land. See Ex. xxxii. 7–9; xxxiii. 3; xxxiv. 9; Acts vii. 51–53. ¶ *A stubborn and rebellious generation.* Stiff-necked, ungovernable; inclined to revolt. Nothing was more remarkable in their early history than this. ¶ *A generation* that *set not their heart aright.* Marg., as in Heb., *prepared not their heart.* That is, they *took no pains* to keep their heart aright, or to cherish right feelings towards God. They yielded to any sudden impulse of passion, even when it led them to revolt against God. This is as true of sinners now as it was of them, that they *take no pains* to have their hearts right with God. If they did, there would be no difficulty in doing it. It is not with them *an object of desire* to have their hearts right with God, and hence nothing is more easy or natural than that they should rebel and go astray. ¶ *And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.* That is, they themselves did not maintain a firm *trust* in God. They yielded readily to every impulse, and every passion, even when it tended to draw them away wholly from him. There was no such *strength* of attachment to him as would lead them to resist temptation, and they easily fell into the sin of idolatry.

9. *The children of Ephraim.* The sons of Ephraim; that is, the descendants of Ephraim; the tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was one of the *largest* of the tribes of Israel, and was the *chief* tribe in the rebellion, and hence the term is often used to denote the *ten* tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, in contradistinction from that of Judah. See Isa. vii. 2, 5, 8, 9, 17; xi. 13; xxviii. 1. The word is evidently used in this sense here, not as denoting that one tribe only, but that tribe as the head of the revolted kingdom; or, in other words, the name is used as representing the kingdom of that name after the revolt. See 1 Kings xii. This verse evidently contains the *gist* or the main idea of the psalm,—to wit, that *Ephraim*, or the *ten tribes*, had turned away from the worship of the true God, and that, in consequence of that apostasy, the government had been transferred to another tribe—the tribe of Judah. See vers. 67, 68. ¶ Being *armed.* The idea in this phrase is, that they had abundant means for maintaining their independence in connexion with the other tribes, or as a part of the nation, but that they refused to co-operate with their brethren. ¶ And *carrying bows.* Marg., *throwing forth.* Literally, *lifting up.* The idea is, that they were armed with bows; or, that they were fully armed. ¶ *Turned back in the day of battle.* That is, they did not stand by their brethren, or assist them in defending their country. There is probably no reference here to any particular battle, but the idea is, that in the wars of the nation—in those wars which were waged for national purposes—they refused to join with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in defence of the lawful government.

10. *They kept not the covenant of God.* The covenant which God had made with the entire Hebrew people. They did not maintain their allegiance to Jehovah. Comp. Deut. iv. 13, 23; xvii. 2. ¶ *And refused to walk in his law.* Refused to *obey* his law. They rebelled against him.

11. *And forgat his works.* The

his wonders that he had shewed them.

12 Marvellous things [g] did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, *in* the field of [h] Zoan.

13 He divided [i] the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made [k] the waters to stand as an heap.

14 In [l] the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

15 He clave [m] the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.

16 He [n] brought streams also

g Ex. vii.—xii. *h* Isa. xix. 11, 13.
i Ex. xiv. 21. *k* Ex. xv. 8.
l Ex. xiii. 21.
m Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 11; 1 Cor. x. 4.
n Ps. cv. 41.

works which he had performed in behalf of the nation. These works are referred to in the verses following. ¶ *And his wonders that he had shewed them.* The wonderful works in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness;—the miracles which he had wrought in behalf of the nation.

12. *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers.* Things fitted to excite wonder and astonishment. Such were all the miracles that he wrought, in effecting the deliverance of his people. ¶ *In the land of Egypt.* In delivering them from Pharaoh. ¶ In *the field of Zoan.* The Septuagint render this ἐν πεδίῳ Τάνεως—*in the plain of Tanis.* So the Latin Vulgate. Zoan or Tanis was an ancient city of Lower Egypt, situated on the eastern side of the Tanitic arm of the Nile. The name given to it in the Egyptian language signified *low region.* See Notes on Isa. xix. 11. The Hebrews seem to have been located in this region, and it was in this part of Egypt—that is, in the country lying round about Zoan—that the wonders of God were principally manifested in behalf of his people.

13. *He divided the sea,* etc. The Red Sea. Ex. xiv. 21, 22. ¶ *And he made the waters to stand as an heap.* The word rendered *heap* means anything piled up, or a mound; and the idea is, that the waters were piled up on each side of them as a *mound.* See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 7. Comp. Josh. iii. 13, 16; Ex. xv. 8.

14. *In the day-time also he led them with a cloud.* That is, the cloud was the visible symbol of his presence, and its movements determined the way in which they were to go. It was *God* who led them, and who adopted this manner of doing it, so that they had *always* with them, by day and by night, a *visible* proof of his presence. There was that with them which could not be ascribed to any natural causes, and which, therefore, *demonstrated* that God was with them, and that as long as they followed the cloud and the pillar of fire they could not err. See Ex. xiii. 21; xiv. 24. They had the less excuse, therefore, for rebelling against him. ¶ *And all the night with a light of fire.* A column—a pillar—which stood over the camp, and which was a symbol of the Divine presence and guidance. The cloud would not be visible by night, nor would the fire be a good guide by day; and hence the *form* of the symbol was changed. The same thing, however, was intended by both, and together they were standing proofs of the presence of God.

15. *He clave the rocks in the wilderness.* There were two occasions on which the rock was smitten for water; one (Ex. xvii. 6) at Mount Horeb, shortly after they came out of Egypt; and the other (Num. xx. 11), when they had nearly ceased their wanderings in the wilderness. Hence the plural term (*rocks*) is used here. ¶ *And gave* them *drink as* out of *the great depths.* As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply.

16. *He brought streams also out of the rock,* etc. Literally, *flowings.* The

out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking [o] the Most High in the wilderness.

18 And [p] they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God [1] furnish a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and

[o] De. ix. 22; He. iii. 16—19. [p] Ex. xvi. 2. [1] *order.*

waters were poured out in an overflowing stream. Those streams continued to flow, thus constituting a continued proof of the presence of God. See this fully explained in the Notes on 1 Cor. x. 4.

17. *And they sinned yet more against him.* Literally, "They *added* to sin against him." The idea is, that his mercies, and the proofs of his presence were only made the occasion of greater sin on their part. This may have been in two ways;—(1) their sin was thus more aggravated, as being committed against greater light; and (2) they evinced more and more their depravity, in proportion as he bestowed mercies on them,—not an uncommon thing with men. ¶ *By provoking the Most High.* Literally, *embittering.* They rebelled against him. They refused to submit to him. They forgot his mercies. Comp. Deut. ix. 22. ¶ *In the wilderness.* Literally, *in the dry place;* in the desert. In the very place where they were most manifestly dependent on him—where there were no natural streams of water,—where their wants were met by a miraculous supply,—even there did they provoke him, and rebel against him. If he had simply stopped that miraculous supply of water they must have perished. But sinners forget how dependent they are on God, when they sin against him. On what can they rely, if he withdraws from them, and leaves them to themselves?

18. *And they tempted God in their heart.* Ex. xvi. 2. The *heart* was the source of the evil. They were not satisfied with what he gave them. They asked for that which would be more agreeable to them, and they did it with a complaining and a murmuring spirit. It is not wrong in itself to ask of God that which will be *better* than what we now possess, for that is the object of all our prayers; but this may be done from a wrong motive,—for mere self-gratification, as was the case here; or it may be with a murmuring and dissatisfied spirit, such as was evinced on this occasion. In such a case we cannot expect the prayer to be answered *except as a punishment.* ¶ *By asking meat for their lust.* Food. The word *meat* here does not necessarily denote animal food, as it does with us. They asked another kind of food than manna; and they did it, not because this was *necessary* to sustain life, but in order to gratify their appetites. The original word here, however, is not *lusts,* but *souls;* that is, *they asked food for themselves.*

19. *Yea, they spake against God.* That is, in the manner which is immediately specified — by calling in question his power, or his ability to provide for them in the wilderness. See Num. xi. 4. ¶ *They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* In the desert. The word rendered *furnish* is in the margin "*order.*" It means to arrange; to set in order; and here to arrange and provide for, as at a feast. The precise words used by the murmuring Hebrews are not quoted here, but the substance of what they said is retained. The idea is, that what they spake was *equivalent* to saying that God could not prepare a table for them; that is, provide for them, in the desert.

20. *Behold, he smote the rock,* etc. See Notes on ver. 15. The smiting of the rock the first time occurred *before* the murmuring about the food.

the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people.

21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was [q] wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation;

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors [r] of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 [1] Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

[q] Num. xi. 1, etc. [r] Mal. iii. 10.

[1] Or, *Every one did eat the bread of the mighty*, Ps. ciii. 20.

The fact that the rock had been smitten could not be doubted. They had thus had abundant evidence that God was able to do that, and to furnish *water* for them in the desert. It was unreasonable, therefore, to doubt whether he could provide *food* for them,—for this in itself was no more difficult than to furnish water. Yet they are represented as affirming that this was far more difficult, and that, although it was admitted that God had provided *water*, yet that to provide *food* was wholly beyond his power. Their special sin, therefore, was, that they doubted the power of God in one case, when, in another, equally difficult, they had had abundant proof of it. The spirit of murmuring had not been put down by one surprising and undoubted miracle wrought in their behalf,—a miracle which proved that God had all the power needful to meet their wants. ¶ *Can he give bread also?* Does the ability to cause water to flow from a rock prove that there is also ability to produce bread when necessary? They doubted it, and thus murmured against God. ¶ *Can he provide flesh for his people?* They supposed that this required greater power than the providing of water, or even of bread, and that if it were admitted that God could furnish the two former, it would by no means follow that he could provide the latter. It was this, as the next verse shows, which was the immediate occasion of the special anger of the Lord.

21. *Therefore the Lord heard* this, *and was wroth.* See Num. xi. 1, 10. ¶ *So a fire was kindled against Jacob*, etc. Fire may be used here, as in Num. xi. 1, as an emblem of wrath; a fire may have been literally sent down to consume them.

22. *Because they believed not in God.* They did not believe in his power, or in his promises. ¶ *And trusted not in his salvation.* In his power and his willingness to save. They had had abundant evidence of that power, but they still doubted his ability to save them, notwithstanding all that he had done for them.

23. *Though he had commanded the clouds from above.* Though he had showed that he had absolute control over the clouds, and had only to command them and they would furnish rain in abundance. Comp. Notes on Isa. v. 6. ¶ *And opened the doors of heaven.* As he had done at the deluge, Gen. vii. 11. The idea is, that he had rained down manna upon them in such abundance that it might be compared with the waters that had been sent down at the deluge.

24. *And had rained down manna upon them to eat.* Ex. xvi. 4, 5, 14; Num. xi. 7–9. Comp. Notes on John vi. 31. ¶ *And had given them of the corn of heaven.* Food that seemed to come down from heaven. The reference here is to the *manna*, and it is called *corn* in the sense that it was *food*, or that it supplied the place of grain. It may also have been called *corn* from its resemblance to grain. See Ex. xvi. 31.

25. *Man did eat angels' food.* Food that came from heaven; food so directly and manifestly from heaven

26 He caused an east wind to [1] blow in the heaven; and by his power he brought in the south wind.

27 He [s] rained flesh also upon them as dust, and [2] feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea;

28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.

29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for [t] he gave them their own desire;

30 They were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,

[1] *go.* [s] Num. xi. 18, 31. [2] *fowl of wing.* [t] Ps. cvi. 15.

that it might be *supposed* to be the same kind that was eaten there, and that had now been sent down by a special miracle for man;—food so delicate and so free from the ordinary coarse properties of food, that it might be supposed to be such as angels feed on. The word rendered *angels*—אַבִּיר, *abbir*—means properly *strong, mighty,* and may be applied to men in general, Judges v. 22; Lam. i. 15; Jer. xlvi. 15; to animals, Ps. xxii. 13 ("bulls of Bashan"); to princes, Ps. lxviii. 31; or to nobles, Job xxiv. 22. It *might* be rendered here *food of nobles,* or *princes;* that is, food of richer quality, or of a more delicate nature, than common food; such as nobles or princes have on their tables. The immediate connexion, however, would rather seem to demand the rendering in our version, as the food is said to have come down from heaven. It is rendered *food of angels* in the Septuagint, in the Latin Vulgate, in the ancient versions generally, and also by Luther. De Wette renders it, "Each one ate the food of princes;" that is, they all lived like princes. ¶ *He sent them meat to the full.* Food to satisfy; or, as much as they wanted.

26. *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.* See Num. xi. 31. In the history, the quarter from which the wind came is not mentioned, except as it might be indicated by the statement that the "quails were brought from the sea;"—that is, evidently, the Red Sea. This wind would have come from the south-east. The phrase "in the heaven" means in the air, or from above. ¶ *And by his power,* etc. By his direct agency. It was a wind which he caused to blow for the purpose; a miracle.

27. *He rained flesh also upon them as dust.* The flesh of quails, Num. xi. 31. The word *rained* means that they seemed to come upon them *like* a copious shower. The word *dust* denotes their great abundance. ¶ *And feathered fowls.* Marg., as in Heb., *fowl of wing.* This is a poetic expression, designed to give beauty to the description by the image of their fluttering wings. ¶ *Like as the sand of the sea.* An expression also designed to denote their great numbers, Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12; xli. 49; Josh. xi. 4; 1 Sam. xiii. 5; Rev. xx. 8.

28. *And he let* it *fall in the midst of their camp,* etc. It was brought to their very doors; they had not to go and seek it abroad.

29. *So they did eat, and were well filled.* The word rendered *well* here is intensive. It means that they were abundantly satisfied; that there was no lack; that they had the most ample supply. ¶ *For he gave them their own desire.* He gave them exactly what they asked. He gave them flesh to eat as they had demanded; and he gave it to them in such quantities that no one could say that he had not enough.

30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* Literally, *They were not made strangers to;* that is, in regard to their lusts or desires they were not in the condition of *foreigners* or aliens; they were not separated from them. The word *lusts* here means *desires, wishes.* It is not used here in the restricted sense in which it is now with us. The reference is to their

31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and [1] smote down the [2] chosen *men* of Israel,

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

[1] *made to bow.* [2] Or, *young*, Isa. xl. 30, 31.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

34 When [u] he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God:

u Isa. xxvi. 16; Hosea v. 15.

desire for food different from manna,—for *flesh*; and the idea is, that they did not restrain their intense desire even when it should have been fully satisfied. They indulged to excess, and the consequence was that many of them perished. ¶ *But while their meat* was *yet in their mouths.* Even while they were eating, and were indulging in this unrestrained manner.

31. *The wrath of God came upon them.* See Num. xi. 33. ¶ *And slew the fattest of them.* Literally, *slew among their fat ones.* That is, The most vigorous among them were cut down; the men most eminent for rank, for influence, for strength, for valour. How far this was the natural effect of indulgence in eating, and how far it was a direct miracle, cannot now be ascertained. In either case it would equally show the Divine displeasure. ¶ *And smote down.* Marg., as in Heb., *made to bow.* That is, they were made to bow in death. ¶ *The chosen* men *of Israel.* Marg., *Young men.* The idea is that of select men; men that would be chosen from among the others; men distinguished for vigour or influence. Not the aged or the feeble particularly, not those who might be naturally expected to fall, but men of strength who might be supposed to be capable of resisting the ordinary attacks of disease. God showed in this way that the judgment came directly from his hand.

32. *For all this they sinned still.* Even this did not reclaim them, and prevent their sinning. Heavy judgments do not always restrain men from sin. Not unfrequently they take occasion *from* such judgments to sin the more. ¶ *And believed not for his wondrous works.* They did not trust in his wondrous works; or, those works did not have the effect of producing faith. See vers. 22, 23. The same thing occurred in the life of the Saviour. John xii. 37.

33. *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity.* He suffered them to spend their days—the days of that entire generation—in vain and fruitless wanderings in the desert. Instead of leading them at once to the promised land, they were kept there to wear out their life in tedious monotony, accomplishing nothing,—wandering from place to place,—until all the generation that had come out of Egypt had died. ¶ *And their years in trouble.* Literally, *in terror.* Amidst the troubles, the alarms, the terrors of a vast and frightful desert. Sin—rebellion against God—leads to a course of life, and a death, of which these gloomy, sad, and cheerless wanderings in the desert were a striking emblem.

34. *When he slew them.* When he came forth in his wrath and cut them down by the plague, by fiery serpents, or by their enemies. ¶ *Then they sought him.* Their calamities had the effect of producing temporary reformation. They became professedly penitent; they manifested a wish to know God, and expressed a purpose to serve him. It was, however, a temporary and hollow, not a deep and real reformation. This often occurs. In times of affliction, in sickness, in bereavement, in the loss of property, men become serious, and express a purpose to repent and turn to God. A deep impression seems to be produced on their minds, to last, alas! only as long as the hand of God rests upon them. Resolutions of re-

35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, [v] and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter [w] him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues:

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave [x] *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and [y] did not stir up all his wrath:

[v] Deut. xxxii. 4, 15. [w] Deut. v. 28, 29. [x] Num. xiv. 18, 20. [y] Isa. xlviii. 9.

pentance are formed only to be forgotten when the affliction is removed, and when the days of prosperity again return. ¶ *And they returned and enquired early after God.* The word rendered "*enquired early*" has reference to the first rays of the morning —the aurora—the dawn. Then it comes to denote the beginning of anything; or, the first thing. Thus employed, it may refer to the act of seeking God as the first thing; in youth; in the morning; at the commencement of any enterprise or undertaking. See Prov. viii. 17; i. 28. Here it means that, in their affliction, they did not delay to seek God, but expressed an early intention of serving him. They evinced a prompt purpose to break off their sins, and to return to him.

35. *And they remembered that God* was *their Rock.* See Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 31. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. That is, they were brought to reflect that their only security and defence was God. They were made to feel that they could not rely on themselves, or on any human power, and that their only trust was in God. ¶ *And the high God their Redeemer.* The God who is exalted over all; the true and living God. The truth was brought to their recollection that it was He who had delivered them from bondage in Egypt, and who had brought them out into freedom. On the word *Redeemer,* see Notes on Isa. xli. 14. Comp. Isa. xliii. 14; xliv. 6, 24; xlvii. 4; lix. 20; Ps. xxv. 22; Job v. 20.

36. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth.* The word rendered *flatter* means properly *to open;* and hence *to be open; to be ingenuous* or *frank;* and then, to be easily persuaded, to be deluded, to be beguiled; and hence, also, in an active form, to persuade, to entice, to seduce, to beguile, to delude. The meaning here is, that they attempted to deceive by their professions, or that their professions were false and hollow. Those professions were the *mere* result of affliction. They were based on no principle; there was no true love or confidence at the foundation. Such professions or promises are often made in affliction. Under the pressure of heavy judgments, the loss of property, the loss of friends, or the failure of health, men become serious, and resolve to give attention to religion. It is rarely that such purposes are founded in sincerity, and that the conversions apparently resulting from them are true conversions. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render the phrase here, "They *loved* with their mouth." ¶ *And they lied unto him with their tongues.* They made promises which they did not keep.

37. *For their heart was not right with him.* Luther renders this, *Not fast with him.* The Hebrew word means *to fit, to prepare;* and the idea is, that the heart was not *adjusted* to such a profession, or did not *accord* with such a promise or pledge. It was a mere profession made by the lips, while the heart remained unaffected. See Notes on ver. 8. ¶ *Neither were they stedfast in his covenant.* In maintaining his covenant, or in adhering to it. Comp. Ps. xxv. 14; xliv. 17. See also ver. 8.

38. *But he,* being *full of compassion.* Literally, *But he, merciful.*

39 For he remembered [z] that they *were but* flesh; a wind [a] that passeth away, and cometh not again.

40 How oft did they [1] provoke [b] him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!

41 Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited [c] the Holy One of Israel.

z Ps. ciii. 14. *a* James iv. 14.
[1] Or, *rebel against.*

b Ps. xcv. 8—10. *c* vers. 19, 20.

That is, he was ready to forgive them. ¶ *Forgave* their *iniquity.* Literally, *Atoned for, expiated, covered over their iniquity.* There is connected with the word the idea of expiation or atonement, as the ground of pardon. ¶ *And destroyed* them *not.* Did not cut them off in their repeated acts of rebellion. He bore with them, and spared them. ¶ *Yea, many a time turned he his anger away.* Literally, *He multiplied to turn his anger away.* That is, he did it repeatedly. There were frequent occasions on their journey for doing this, and he did it. ¶ *And did not stir up all his wrath.* Literally, *Did not excite,* or *arouse all his anger.* His anger was stayed or mitigated, and they were suffered still to live.

39. *For he remembered that they* were but *flesh.* That they were human; that they were weak; that they were prone to err; that they were liable to fall into temptation. In his dealings with them he took into view their fallen nature; their training; their temptations; their trials; their weaknesses; and he judged them accordingly. Comp. Ps. ciii. 14. So it was with the Saviour in his treatment of his disciples, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41. God will judge men as they are; he will not in his judgments forget that they *are* men, and that they are weak and feeble. Men often judge their fellow-men with much more harshness, with much less allowance for their infirmities and weaknesses, than God shows in his dealings with mankind. And yet such are the very men who are most ready to blame God for his judgments. If God acted on the principle and in the manner according to which they act, they could hope for no mercy at his hand. It is well for them that there is not one like themselves on the throne of the universe. ¶ *A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.* Which blows by us, and is gone for ever. What a striking description is this of man! How true of an individual! How true of a generation! How true of the race at large! God remembers this when he thinks of men, and he deals with them accordingly. He is not harsh and severe, but kind and compassionate. To man, a being so feeble,—to the human race, so frail,—to the generations of that race, so transitory, so soon passing off the stage of life,—he is ever willing to show compassion. He does not make use of his great power to crush them; he prefers to manifest his mercy in saving them.

40. *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness.* Marg., *Or, rebel against him.* The Hebrew word may have the signification in the margin. The idea is, that they were perverse and rebellious; that they excited his displeasure, and gave occasion for his anger. See ver. 17. ¶ And *grieve him in the desert.* The word here rendered *grieve* means (1) *to work, to fashion;* (2) *to suffer pain, to travail, to be afflicted;* and then, (3) to *cause* one to suffer pain, or *to afflict.* The meaning here is that the conduct of the Hebrews was such as was fitted to cause pain,—as the conduct of a disobedient and rebellious child is.

41. *Yea, they turned back, and tempted God.* They turned away from his service; they were disposed to return to Egypt, and to place themselves in the condition in which they were before they were delivered

42 They remembered not his hand, *nor* the day when he delivered them from the [1] enemy:
43 How he had [2] wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders [d] in the field of Zoan:
44 And had turned their rivers into [e] blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.
45 He [f] sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.

[1] Or, *affliction.* [2] *set.* [d] ver. 12.
[e] Ex. vii. 20. [f] Ex. viii. 6, 24.

from bondage. ¶ *And limited the Holy One of Israel.* The idea is, that they set a limit to the power of God; they fancied or alleged—(and this is a thing often done practically even by the professed people of God)—that there was a boundary in respect to power which he could not pass, or that there were things to be done which he had not the ability to perform. The original word—תָּוָה, *tavah*—occurs but three times in the Scriptures;—in 1 Sam. xxi. 13, where it is rendered *scrabbled* (in the margin, *made marks*); in Ezek. ix. 4, where it is rendered *set, i.e.*, set a mark (marg., *mark*); and in the place before us. It is rendered here by the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, *to provoke to anger.* De Wette translates it *troubled.* Professor Alexander, "On the Holy One of Israel [they] set a mark." The *idea* in the word would seem to be that of making a mark for any purpose; and then it means to delineate; to scrawl; or to set a mark for a limit or boundary. Thus it might be applied to God,—as if, in estimating his character or his power, they set *limits* or *bounds* to it, as one does in marking out a farm or a house-lot in a city or town. There was a limit, in their estimation, to the power of God, beyond which he could not act; or, in other words, his power was *defined* and *bounded,* so that beyond a certain point he could not aid them.

42. *They remembered not his hand.* His gracious interpositions; the manifestations of his power. They forgot that power *had been* exercised which showed that he was omnipotent,—that there *was* no limit to his ability to aid them. ¶ Nor *the day when he delivered them from the enemy.* The time when he rescued them. The power then manifested was sufficient to defend and deliver them in any new dangers that could befall them. The margin is, *from affliction.* The Hebrew will admit of either interpretation. The sense is not materially changed.

43. *How he had wrought his signs in Egypt.* Marg., *set.* The Hebrew word means to set or place. The word *signs* here refers to miracles as signs or indications of God's power and favour. The things which he did were of such a nature as to show that he was almighty, and at the same time to assure them of his disposition to protect them. ¶ *And his wonders in the field of Zoan.* The wonderful things which he did; the things fitted to excite amazement, or astonishment. On the word Zoan, see Notes on ver. 12.

44. *And had turned their rivers into blood.* Ex. vii. 20. There was properly but one *river* in Egypt—the Nile. But there were several branches of that river at the mouth; and there were numerous artificial streams or canals cut from the river, to any one of which the word *river* might be also given. Comp. Notes on Isa. xi. 15. ¶ *And their floods,* etc. Their streams; the canals and branches of the Nile, where they usually obtained a supply of water.

45. *He sent divers sorts of flies,* etc. The account of this plague is found in Ex. viii. 24. The word there used is simply "*swarm,*" without indicating *what* the swarm was composed of. The Rabbins explain the word as denoting a *mixture,* or a *conflux* of noxious insects, as if the word were

46 He *g* gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

47 He [1] destroyed their vines with *h* hail, and their sycamore-

g Ex. x. 13. [1] *killed.* *h* Ex. ix. 23—25.

trees with [2] frost.

48 He [3] gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to [4] hot thunderbolts.

[2] Or, *great hailstones.* [3] *shut up.* [4] Or, *lightnings.*

derived from עָרַב—*arab*—*to mix.* The Septuagint renders it κυνόμυια—*dog-fly*—which Philo describes as so named from its impudence. The common explanation of the word now is that it denotes a species of fly—the gad-fly—exceedingly troublesome to man and beast, and that it derives its name—עָרֹב, *arob*—from the verb עָרַב, *arab*, in one of its significations *to suck*, and hence the allusion to *sucking* the blood of animals. The word occurs only in the following places, Exod. viii. 21, 22, 24, 29, 31, where it is rendered *swarm*, or *swarms*, and Ps. cv. 31, where (as here) it is rendered *divers sorts of flies.* ¶ *And frogs which destroyed them.* Ex. viii. 6. The *order* in which the plagues occurred is not preserved in the account in the psalm.

46. *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar.* The increase or the produce of their fields. Exod. x. 12–14. The word חָסִיל, *khasil*—is supposed to denote a species of locust rather than the caterpillar. It literally means *the devourer.* In our version, however, it is uniformly rendered *caterpillar* as here; 1 Kings viii. 37; 2 Chron. vi. 28; Isa. xxxiii. 4; Joel i. 4; ii. 25. It occurs nowhere else. ¶ *And their labour unto the locust.* The fruit of their labour; the harvests in their fields.

47. *He destroyed their vines with hail.* Marg., *killed.* See Exod. ix. 22–26. In the account in Exodus the hail is said to have smitten man and beast, the herb, and the tree of the field. In the psalm only one thing is mentioned, perhaps denoting the ruin by what would be particularly felt in Palestine, where the culture of the grape was so common and so important. ¶ *And their sycamore trees with frost.* The sycamore is mentioned particularly as giving poetic beauty to the passage. Of the sycamore tree, Dr. Thomson remarks ("Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 25), "It is a tender tree, flourishes immensely in sandy plains and warm vales, but cannot bear the hard, cold mountain. A sharp frost will kill them; and this agrees with the fact that they were killed by it in Egypt. Among the wonders wrought in the field of Zoan, David says, 'He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamores with frost.' Certainly, a frost keen enough to kill the sycamore would be one of the greatest 'wonders' that could happen at the present day in this same field of Zoan." The word rendered *frost*—חֲנָמַל, *khanamal*—occurs nowhere else. It is parallel with the word *hail* in the other member of the sentence, and denotes something that would be destructive to trees. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic render it *frost.* Gesenius renders it *ants.*

48. *He gave up their cattle also to the hail.* Marg., *he shut up.* Ex. ix. 22–25. ¶ *And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.* Marg., *lightnings.* The original word means flame; then, lightning. There is no allusion in the word to the idea of a *bolt*, or *shaft*, accompanying the lightning or the thunder, by which destruction is produced. The destruction is caused by the lightning, and not by the thunder, and it is hardly necessary to say that there is no *shaft* or *bolt* that accompanies it. Probably this notion was formerly entertained, and found its way into the common language used. The same idea is retained by us in the word *thunderbolt.* But this idea is not in the original; nor is there any foundation for it in fact.

49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them.*

50 He [1] made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their [2] life over to the pestilence;

51 And smote all the first-born

[1] *weighed a path.* [2] Or, *beasts to the murrain,* Ex. ix. 3—6.

i in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

53 And *k* he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea [3] overwhelmed their enemies.

54 And he brought them to

i Ex. xii. 29. *k* Ex. xiv., xv. [3] *covered.*

49. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,* etc. This verse is designed to describe the last, and the most dreadful of the plagues that came upon the Egyptians, the slaying of their first-born; and hence there is such an *accumulation* of expressions:—anger,—fierce anger,—wrath,—indignation,—trouble. All these expressions are designed to be emphatic; all these things were combined when the first-born were slain. There was no form of affliction that could surpass this; and in this trial all the expressions of the Divine displeasure seemed to be exhausted. It was *meant* that this should be the last of the plagues; it was meant that the nation should be humbled, and should be made willing that the people of Israel should go. ¶ *By sending evil angels* among them. There is reference here undoubtedly to the slaying of the first-born in Egypt. Ex. xi. 4, 5; xii. 29, 30. This work is ascribed to the agency of a *destroyer* (Ex. xii. 23; comp. Heb. xi. 28), and the allusion seems to be to a *destroying angel,* or to an angel employed and commissioned to accomplish such a work. Comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 2 Kings xix. 35. The idea here is not that the angel himself was *evil* or *wicked,* but that he was the *messenger* of evil or calamity; he was the instrument by which these afflictions were brought upon them.

50. *He made a way to his anger.* Marg., *he weighed a path.* He levelled a path for it; he took away all hindrance to it; he allowed it to have free scope. The idea of *weighing* is not in the original. The allusion is to a preparation made by which one can march along freely, and without any obstruction. See Notes on Isa. xl. 3, 4. ¶ *He spared not their soul from death.* He spared not their *lives.* That is, he gave them over to death. ¶ *But gave their life over to the pestilence.* Marg., *their beasts to the murrain.* The original will admit of either interpretation, but the connexion seems rather to demand the interpretation which is in the text. Both these things, however, occurred.

51. *And smote all the firstborn in Egypt.* See Ex. xi. 4, 5; xii. 29, 30. ¶ *The chief of* their *strength.* Those on whom they relied; their firstborn; their pride; their glory; their heirs. Comp. Gen. xlix. 3. ¶ *In the tabernacles of Ham.* The tents; the dwelling-places of Ham;—that is, of Egypt. Comp. Gen. x. 6; Ps. cv. 23, 27; cvi. 22.

52. *But made his own people to go forth like sheep,* etc. That is, he was a shepherd to them. He defended them; provided for them; led them—as a shepherd does his flock. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.

53. *And he led them on safely, so that they feared not.* In hope; in confidence; so that they had no occasion for alarm. He showed himself able and willing to defend them. ¶ *But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.* Marg., as in Heb., *covered.* See Ex. xiv. 27, 28; xv. 10.

54. *And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, *to the mountain of his holiness;*

the border of his sanctuary, *even to* this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided [l] them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies;

57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For [m] they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

[l] Josh. xix. 51. [m] Judges ii. 12, 20.

that is, his holy mountain. But the reference is rather to the whole land of Canaan. He brought them to the borders of that land—the land of promise—the holy land. They who came out from Egypt did not indeed enter that land, except Caleb and Joshua, but they were conveyed to its borders before all of them fell. It was true also that the people—the Hebrew people—came *to* the promised land, and secured its possession. ¶ Even to *this mountain.* Mount Zion; for the object of the psalm was to show that the worship of God was properly celebrated there. See ver. 68. The meaning is not that the people who came out of Egypt actually inherited that mountain, but that their descendants—the people of God—had been put in possession of it. ¶ Which *his right hand had purchased.* Had procured, or obtained possession of. That is, he had secured it by his power.

55. *He cast out the heathen also before them.* Literally, *the nations.* The idea of their being *heathen*, in the sense which is now attached to that word, is not in the original. The word is one which would be applied to any nation, without reference to its religion. These nations were, indeed, *heathens* according to the present use of that term, but that idea is not necessarily in the Hebrew word. ¶ *And divided them an inheritance by line.* Divided to his people an inheritance by a measurement of the land. That is, the land was partitioned out among the tribes, by a survey, fixing their limits and boundaries. See Joshua xiii. 7; xviii.; xix. ¶ *And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.* To dwell securely and quietly, no longer roaming from place to place, but having a fixed habitation and a home.

56. *Yet they tempted and provoked,* etc. They tried the patience of God, and provoked him to anger *after* they were peaceably settled in the promised land. See Judges ii. 10–13. The object is to show that it was the character of the people that they were prone to depart from God. Comp. Notes on vers. 10, 11, 17, 40.

57. *But turned back,* etc. See Notes on ver. 41. ¶ *They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.* Literally, *a bow of deceit.* That is, a bow that could not be depended on; a bow, one of whose arms was longer or more elastic than the other, so that the arrow would turn aside from the mark. The marksman would attempt to hit an object, and would fail. So it was with the people of Israel. They could not be depended on. No reliance could be put on their promises, their covenant-engagements, their attachment, their fidelity; for in these things they failed, as the arrow from a deceitful bow would fail to strike the mark. Their whole history shows how just was this charge; alas! the history of many of the professed people of God has shown how applicable the description has been to *them* also.

58. *For they provoked him to anger with their high places.* Places where idols were worshipped; usually on mountains or elevated places. Lev. xxvi. 30; comp. 1 Kings iii. 2; xii. 31, 32; 2 Kings xvii. 32; 2 Chron.

59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men;

61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.

62 He [n] gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.

n 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11.

xxxiii. 17. ¶ *And moved him to jealousy.* As one is when affections due to himself are bestowed upon another,—as in the married life. ¶ *With their graven images.* Their idols. Graven images are here put for idols in general.

59. *When God heard* this. Literally, "God heard;" that is, he understood this; he was acquainted with it. He heard their prayers addressed to false gods; he heard their praises sung in honour of idols. ¶ *He was wroth.* This is language taken from the common manner of speaking among men, for language derived from human conceptions and usages must be employed when we speak of God, though it may be difficult to say what is its exact meaning. The general sense is that his conduct towards them was *as if* he was angry; or was that which is used by a man who is displeased. ¶ *And greatly abhorred Israel.* The idea in the word rendered *abhorred* is that of *rejecting them with abhorrence;* that is, the reference is not merely to the internal feeling or emotion, but to the *act* which is the proper accompaniment of such an internal feeling. He cast them off; he treated them as not his own. The addition of the word "*greatly*" shows how intense this feeling was; how decided was his aversion to their conduct.

60. *So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh.* The tabernacle or tent which had been erected at Shiloh. He forsook that as a place where he was to be worshipped; that is, he caused his tabernacle, or his place of worship, to be erected in another place, to wit, on Mount Zion. See ver. 68. The name *Shiloh* means properly *a place of rest,* and seems to have been given to this place *as* such a place, or as a place where the ark might abide after its migrations. Shiloh was a city within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim, on a mountain north of Bethel. Here the ark of God remained for many years after it came into the promised land. Josh. xviii. 1; Judges xviii. 31; xxi. 12, 19; 1 Sam. i. 3, 24; ii. 14; iv. 3, 4. The ark, after it was taken by the Philistines, was never returned to Shiloh, but was deposited successively at Nob (1 Sam. xxi. 1–6), and at Gibeon (1 Kings iii. 4), until David pitched a tabernacle for it on Mount Zion (1 Chron. xv. 1). The meaning here is, that in consequence of the sins of the people, the place of worship was finally and for ever removed from the tribe of Ephraim, within whose limits Shiloh was, to the tribe of Judah, and to Mount Zion. ¶ *The tent* which *he placed among men.* It was the place which he selected as his abode on earth.

61. *And delivered his strength into captivity.* That is, the ark, considered as the symbol of his power. This constituted the defence of the people; this was the emblem of the presence of God, which, when with them, was their real protection. The allusion here is to the time when the ark was taken by the Philistines in the days of Eli. See 1 Sam. iv. 3–11. ¶ *And his glory.* That which was emblematic of his glory, to wit, the ark. ¶ *Into the enemy's hand.* The hand or power of the Philistines.

62. *He gave his people over also unto the sword.* When the ark was taken, 1 Sam. iv. 10. Thirty thousand of the children of Israel fell on that occasion. ¶ *And was wroth with his inheritance.* Was angry with his

63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not [1] given to marriage.

64 Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows made no lamentation.

65 Then the Lord awaked [o] as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man, [p] that shouteth by reason of wine.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder part; he put them to a perpetual reproach.

67 Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and [q] chose not the tribe of Ephraim;

[1] *praised.* [o] Ps. vii. 6. [p] Isa. xlii. 13. [q] Jer. vii. 12—15.

people, considered as his *inheritance;* that is, considered as his own peculiar people, or his possession.

63. *The fire consumed their young men. Fire* here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in Num. xxi. 28: "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab," etc. The idea here is, that the young men had been cut off in war. ¶ *And their maidens were not given to marriage.* As the young men who would have entered into this relation were cut off in war. The margin here is *praised;*—"The maidens were not praised." This is in accordance with the Hebrew. The idea is, "Their virgins were not praised in nuptial songs;" that is, there were no marriage celebrations; no songs such as were usually composed on such occasions in praise of those who were brides. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this much less accurately, and much less beautifully, *were not lamented.*

64. *Their priests fell by the sword.* Comp. 1 Sam. iv. 11. It was considered a special calamity that the ministers of religion were cut down in war. ¶ *And their widows made no lamentation.* That is, the public troubles were so great, the danger was still so imminent, the calamities thickened so fast, that there was no opportunity for public mourning by formal processions of women, and loud lamentations, such as were usual on these occasions. See Notes on Job xxvii. 15. The meaning is not that there was a want of affection or attachment on the part of the friends of the slain, or that there was no real grief, but that there was no opportunity for displaying it in the customary manner.

65. *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep.* Literally, *as one sleeping;* that is, as one who is asleep suddenly arouses himself. The Lord *seemed* to have slept, or to have been inattentive to what was occurring. Suddenly he aroused himself to inflict vengeance on the enemies of his people. Comp. Notes on Ps. vii. 6; xliv. 23. ¶ And *like a mighty man.* The allusion is probably to a warrior. ¶ *That shouteth by reason of wine.* The proper idea here is that of singing, or lifting up the voice in exultation and rejoicing;—the idea of a man who sings and shouts as he is excited by wine, and as he presses onward to conflict and to victory. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare God, as he goes forth to accomplish his purposes on his enemies, with a warrior. See Ex. xv. 3; Ps. xxiv. 8.

66. *And he smote his enemies in the hinder part.* From behind; that is, as they fled. There are two ideas here:—one, that they fled at his approach, or turned their backs; the other, that *as* they fled, he smote and destroyed them. ¶ *He put them to a perpetual reproach.* As discomfited; as defeated and scattered; as unable to contend with him. The allusion is, probably, to the victories of David, occurring *after* the events related in the preceding verses.

67. *Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph.* As a place where his worship should be celebrated. This is the completion of the statement in ver. 60. The design is to

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, [r] the Mount Zion, [s] which he loved.

69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath [1] established for ever.

70 He chose David [t] also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds:

71 From [2] following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed [u] Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

r Gen. xlix. 10. *s* Ps. lxxxvii. 2. [1] *founded.*

t 2 Sam. vii. 8. [2] *after.* *u* 1 Chron. xviii. 7.

show that there had been a *transfer* of the pre-eminence from the tribe of Ephraim to the tribe of Judah, and from Shiloh to Zion. Joseph is here mentioned as the father of Ephraim, from whom one of the tribes—(one of the most influential and numerous)—was named. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom the twelve tribes in general took their name. As the tribe of Levi, however, being devoted to the sacerdotal work, was not reckoned as one of the twelve, the number was made up by giving to the descendants of the two sons of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 5)—a place among the tribes; and, on this account, the name *Joseph* does not appear as one of the twelve tribes. Yet Joseph is mentioned here, as the ancestor of one of them—that of Ephraim, from whom the priority and supremacy were withdrawn in favour of the tribe of Judah. ¶ *And chose not the tribe of Ephraim.* To be the tribe within whose limits the tabernacle should be permanently set up; or within whose limits the place of public worship was finally to be established.

68. *But chose the tribe of Judah.* He chose David of the tribe of Judah as ruler and king; he chose a place within the limits of Judah, to wit, Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, as the place where his worship was to be celebrated. Thus, the ancient prediction in regard to the supremacy of Judah was accomplished. Gen. xlix. 8–10. ¶ *The Mount Zion, which he loved.* Which he chose; for which he had an affection. Comp. Ps. lxxxvii. 2.

69. *And he built his sanctuary.* His holy place; that is, his tabernacle. The temple was not then built; and, when reared, it was not on Mount Zion, but on Mount Moriah. The name *Zion*, however, was often given to the whole city. ¶ *Like high* palaces. The word *palaces* is not in the original. The Hebrew means simply *high places*, like hills or mountains. The meaning is, that his sanctuary was exalted, *as if* it were placed on a high hill. It was a conspicuous object; it could be seen from afar; it was the most prominent thing in the land. See Notes on Isa. ii. 2. ¶ *Like the earth.* Permanent and established. ¶ *Which he hath established for ever.* Marg., as in Heb., *founded.* The earth is often represented as founded or established on a solid basis, and thus becomes an emblem of stability and perpetuity.

70. *He chose David also his servant.* He chose him that he might set him over his people as their king. The idea is, that David was selected when he had no natural pretensions to the office, as he did not pertain to a royal family, and could have no claim to such a distinction. The account of this choice is contained in 1 Sam. xv. 1–30. ¶ *And took him from the sheep-folds.* From the humble occupation of a shepherd. 1 Sam. xvi. 11; 2 Sam. vii. 8.

71. *From following the ewes great with young.* Marg., as in Heb., *From after.* The meaning is, that he followed after them; that is, he attended them, or watched over them as a shepherd. The single word rendered *the ewes great with young*—עֲלוֹת, *aloth*—is a participle from עָלָה (*alah*), *to ascend, to go up;* and then, to bring up, to nourish. The exact idea here is doubtless that of bringing

72 So he fed them according to the integrity [v] of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

[v] 1 Kings ix. 4.

PSALM LXXIX.

A Psalm [1] of Asaph.

O GOD, the heathen [w] are come into thine inheritance; thy

[1] Or, *for*. [w] Lam. i. 10.

up, or of *suckling* them, and the word should have been so translated here. It is so rendered by Luther. The idea in our translation has been derived from the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. The meaning is, that he brought him from being a *shepherd* to be the *ruler* of his people—expressed still in the language of a shepherd life. ¶ *To feed Jacob his people.* Rather, to be a shepherd to them; to perform towards them the office of a shepherd, including the ideas of governing them, providing for them, and defending them. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.

72. *So he fed them.* He performed towards them the office of a shepherd. ¶ *According to the integrity of his heart.* Literally, "According *to the perfection* of his heart." That is, he was upright and pure in the administration of his government. ¶ *And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.* Literally, "by the *understanding* of his hands"—as if the *hand* had been endued with intelligence. Comp. Ps. cxliv. 1: "Which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." See also Ps. cxxxvii. 5. The idea is, that he administered the government with integrity and uprightness. This is a beautiful tribute to the integrity and purity of the administration of David. It is not the language of flattery; it is a simple statement, flowing from the heart, in favour of a just and upright administration; and it is a *true* statement of what the administration of David was. Save in the matter of Uriah—over which he afterwards wept so bitterly,—his administration was eminently just, pure, impartial, wise, and benignant; probably none among men have been more so. The whole psalm is thus a beautiful *argument* showing why the government had been transferred from Ephraim to Judah, and why it had been placed in the hands of David.

PSALM LXXIX.

This psalm, also, purports to be a psalm of Asaph; that is, it was either composed by him or for him; or it was the composition of one of his descendants who presided over the music in the sanctuary, and to whom was given the general family name, *Asaph*. The psalm pertains to the same general subject as Ps. lxxiv., and was composed evidently in view of the same calamities. Rüdinger, De Wette, and some others, suppose that the reference in the psalm is to the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes. To this opinion, also, Rosenmüller inclines. The most common, and the most probable supposition, however, is that it refers to the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—I. A statement of the calamity which had come upon the nation. The heathen had come into the heritage of God; they had defiled the sanctuary; they had made Jerusalem desolate; they had murdered the inhabitants; and the nation had become a reproach before the world, vers. 1-4. II. A prayer for the Divine interposition, vers. 5, 6. III. Reasons for that prayer, or reasons why God should interpose in the case, vers. 7-13. These reasons are, (*a*) that they had devoured Jacob, ver. 7; (*b*) that the people, on account of their sins, had been brought very low, ver. 8; (*c*) that the Divine glory was at stake, vers. 9, 10; (*d*) that they were in a suffering and pitiable condition, many being held as captives, and many ready to die, ver. 11; (*e*) that justice demanded this, ver. 12; and (*f*) that this interposition would lay the foundation for praise to God, ver. 13.

1. *O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.* The nations; a foreign people. See Notes on Ps. ii. 1, 8; lxxviii. 55. The term is one that would be applicable to the

[x] holy temple have they defiled; they [y] have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none [z] to bury *them.*

4 We are become a reproach [a] to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy [b] burn like fire?

6 Pour [c] out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known

[x] Ps. lxxiv. 2—7. [y] 2 Kings xxv. 9, 10. [z] Jer. xvi. 4; xxxiv. 20. [a] Deut. xxviii. 37. [b] Zeph. i. 18. [c] Jer. x. 25; Rev. xvi. 1.

Chaldeans, or Babylonians, and the probable allusion here is to their invasion of the Holy Land under Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17–21. ¶ *Thy holy temple have they defiled.* They have polluted it. By entering it; by removing the sacred furniture; by cutting down the carved work; by making it desolate. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17, 18. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 5–7. ¶ *They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.* See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19: "And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof."

2. *The dead bodies of thy servants,* etc. They have slain them, and left them unburied. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. This is a description of wide-spread carnage and slaughter, such as we know occurred at the time when Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans. At such a time, it is not probable that the Chaldeans would pause to bury the slain, nor is it probable that they would give opportunity to the captive Hebrews to remain to bury them. That would occur, therefore, which often occurs in war, that the slain would be left on the field to be devoured by wild animals and by the fowls of heaven.

3. *Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem.* They have poured it out in such quantities that it seems to flow like water—not an uncommon occurrence in war. There was no event in the history of the Hebrews to which this description would be more applicable than to the Babylonian invasion. The *language* might indeed be applicable to the desolation of the city by Antiochus Epiphanes, and also to its destruction by the Romans; but, of course, it cannot refer to the latter, and there is no necessity for supposing that it refers to the former. All the conditions of a proper interpretation are fulfilled by supposing that it refers to the time of the Chaldean invasion. ¶ *And* there was *none to bury* them. The Chaldeans would not do it, and they would not suffer the Hebrew people to do it.

4. *We are become a reproach to our neighbours.* See the language in this verse explained in the Notes on Ps. xliv. 13. The words in the Hebrew are the same, and the one seems to have been copied from the other.

5. *How long,* LORD? See Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 1, 10, and Ps. lxxvii. 7–9. This is the language, not of impatience, but of anxiety; not of murmuring, but of wonder. It is language such as the people of God are often constrained to employ under heavy trials,—trials which continue so long that it *seems* as if they would never end. ¶ *Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?* That is, Shall it *continue* to burn like fire? Shall it utterly consume us? On the word *jealousy,* see Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 58.

6. *Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen.* Punish, as they deserve, the nations that have risen up against thy people, and that have brought desolation upon the land. The word

thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place.

8 O [d] remember not against us [1] former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very [e] low.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name;

d Ps. cxxx. 3; Isa. lxiv. 9.

1 Or, *the iniquities of them that were before us.*

e Deut. xxviii. 43.

rendered here *pour out* is used with reference to a cup or vial, as containing a mixture for the people to drink, —of intoxication, or of poison. See Notes on Rev. xvi. 1; Ps. xi. 6; Isa. li. 17; comp. Jer. xxv. 15, 17; Matt. xx. 22; xxvi. 39, 42. ¶ *That have not known thee.* Who are strangers to thee; who are thy enemies. The prayer that the wrath of God might be poured upon them was not *because* they were ignorant of him, but on account of their wicked conduct toward the people of God. The phrase "that have not known thee" is used merely to designate them, or to describe their character. The prayer is not necessarily a prayer for vengeance, or in the spirit of revenge; it is simply a prayer that justice might be done to them, and is such a prayer as any man may offer who is anxious that justice may be done in the world. See remarks on the imprecations in the Psalms. General Introd. § 6. It is not proper, however, to use this as a proof-text that God *will* punish the "heathen," or will consign them to destruction. The passage obviously has no reference to such a doctrine, whether that doctrine be true or false. ¶ *And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.* The people that do not worship thee; referring here particularly to those who had invaded the land, and made it desolate.

7. *For they have devoured Jacob.* Literally, "They have eaten." That is, they have eaten up what the land produced. ¶ *And laid waste his dwelling-place.* His home; his habitation; the residence of Jacob, or of the people of Israel.

8. *O remember not against us former iniquities.* Marg., *The iniquities of them that were before us.* The Hebrew may mean either *former times*, or *former generations.* The allusion, however, is substantially the same. It is not *their own* iniquities which are particularly referred to, but the iniquity of the nation as committed in former times; and the prayer is, that God would not visit *them* with the results of the sins of former generations, though their own ancestors. The language is derived from the idea so constantly affirmed in the Scripture, and so often illustrated in fact, that the effects of sin pass over from one generation to the next, and involve it in calamity. See Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7; Lev. xx. 5; xxvi. 39, 40; Num. xiv. 18, 33; comp. Notes on Rom. v. 12, *et seq.* ¶ *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us.* Literally, "Hasten; let thy tender mercies anticipate us." The word *prevent* here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, does not mean to *hinder*, as with us, but to go before; to anticipate. See Notes on Job iii. 12; Ps. xvii. 13; xxi. 3; Isa. xxi. 14; Matt. xvii. 25; 1 Thess. iv. 15. The prayer here is, that God, in his tender mercy or compassion, would *anticipate* their ruin; would interpose *before* matters had gone so far as to make their destruction inevitable. ¶ *For we are brought very low.* The idea in the original word is that of being *pendulous*, or *hanging down*—as vines do, or as anything does that is wilted, or withered, or as the hands do when one is weak, faint, or sick. Then it refers to a failure or exhaustion of strength; and the idea here is that their strength as a nation was exhausted.

9. *Help us, O God of our salva-*

and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, *by* the [1] revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.

11 Let *f* the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of [2] thy power [3] preserve thou those that are appointed to die:

[1] *vengeance.* *f* Ps. cii. 20.

[2] *thine arm.*

[3] *reserve the children of death.*

tion. On whom our salvation depends; who alone can save us. ¶ *For the glory of thy name.* That thy name may be honoured. We are thy professed people; we have been redeemed by thee; and thine honour will be affected by the question whether we are saved or destroyed. It is the *highest* and *purest* ground for prayer, that the glory or honour of God may be promoted. See Notes on Matt. vi. 9, 13; John xii. 28; Dan. ix. 19. ¶ *And deliver us.* From our enemies. ¶ *And purge away our sins.* Forgive our sins, or cleanse us from them. The original word is that which is commonly used to denote an atonement. Comp. in the Hebrew, Dan. ix. 24; Ezek. xlv. 20; Ex. xxx. 15; xxxii. 30; Lev. iv. 20; v. 26; xvi. 6, 11, 24. ¶ *For thy name's sake.* See Notes on Dan. ix. 19.

10. *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?* The *nations.* Why should such a course of forbearance towards them be pursued as to lead them to ask the question whether God is *able* to punish them, or to come to the conclusion that he is *not* the God of those who profess to worship him. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 3, 10. ¶ *Let him be known among the heathen.* Let him so manifest himself among them that they cannot but see that he is God; that he is a just God; that he is the Friend and Protector of his people. ¶ *In our sight.* So that *we* may see it; or, so that it may be seen that he is *our* Friend and Protector. ¶ By *the revenging of the blood of thy servants* which is *shed.* Marg., *vengeance.* The true idea is, "Let the avenging of the blood of thy servants —the blood poured out [or shed] be known among the nations in our sight." The prayer is that God would so interpose that there could be no doubt that it was on account of the blood of his people which had been shed by their enemies. It is a prayer that just punishment might be executed,—a prayer which may be offered at any time.

11. *Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.* The sighing of him who is *bound.* The allusion here is, doubtless, to those among the Hebrews who had been taken captives, and who "sighed" not only on account of the sufferings which they endured in their bondage, but because they had been taken from their country and home. The meaning is, "Hear those sighs, and come for the deliverance of those who are thus held in captivity." ¶ *According to the greatness of thy power.* Marg., as in Heb., *thine arm.* The arm is the symbol of power. It is implied here that great power was needful to deliver those who were held in captivity,—power such as God only could exert,—power which could be wielded only by an Omnipotent Being. It was the power of God only which *could* rescue them, as it is only by the power of God that sinners can be saved. ¶ *Preserve thou those that are appointed to die.* Marg., *Reserve the children of death.* The literal meaning is, "Let remain the sons of death;" that is, Preserve those who are in such circumstances that death is impending, and who may be called *the sons of death.* This might apply to those who were condemned to death; or, to those who were sick and in danger of death; or to those who were prisoners and captives, and who were, by their sufferings, exposed to death. The prayer is that such

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, *g* wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

13 So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever; we will shew *h* forth thy praise to [1] all generations.

g Ps. lxxiv. 18.

h Isa. xliii. 21.

[1] *generation and generation.*

might be suffered to *remain* on the earth; that is, that they might be kept alive.

12. *And render unto our neighbours.* That is, the *neighbours* who had reproached them; the surrounding people who had seen these calamities come upon them, and who had regarded these calamities as proof that their God was unable to protect them, or that they were suffering under his displeasure. See Notes on ver. 4. ¶ *Sevenfold.* Seven times the amount of reproach which they have heaped upon us. The word *seven* is often used to denote *many*, as seven was one of the perfect numbers. The idea is that of *complete* or *full* vengeance. Comp. Gen. iv. 15, 24; Prov. vi. 31; Isa. xxx. 26; Matt. xviii. 21, 22; Luke xvii. 4. ¶ *Into their bosom*, etc. Perhaps the allusion here is to the custom of carrying things in the bosom of the flowing dress as it was girded around the loins. "Let them be made *to carry with them* seven times the amount of reproach which they have endeavoured to heap on us."

13. *So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture.* See Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 1. ¶ *Will give thee thanks for ever.* Will praise thee always; will acknowledge thee as our God, and will evermore render thee thanksgiving. ¶ *We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *to generation and generation.* That is, We will make arrangements that the memory of these gracious acts shall be transmitted to future times; to distant generations. This was done by the permanent record, made in the Scriptures, of these gracious interpositions of God, and by their being carefully preserved by each generation to whom they came. No work has been more faithfully done than that by which the records of God's ancient dealings with his people have been preserved from age to age,—that by which the sacred Scriptures have been guarded against error, and handed down from one generation to another.

PSALM LXXX.

This very touching and beautiful psalm purports also to be a psalm of Asaph. Comp. Notes on the title to Psalm lxxiii. On the phrase "upon Shoshannim-eduth" in the title, see Notes on the titles to Ps. xlv. and Ps. lx. The word rendered *eduth*, which means *testimony*, may have been used here with reference to the contents of the psalm *as* a public testimony in regard to the dealings of God with his people. But it is not possible now to determine with certainty the meaning of these titles.

The psalm, in its design, has a strong resemblance to Ps. lxxiv. and Ps. lxxix., and was probably composed on the same occasion. It has been generally supposed to have reference to the time of the Babylonish captivity. Some have referred it, however, to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and others regard it as a prayer of the ten tribes which had been carried away to Assyria. Doederlein supposes that it refers to the wars of Jehoshaphat with the Ammonites (2 Chron. xx.); and others suppose that it refers to the troubles caused by the Philistines. It is impossible now to determine with certainty the time or the occasion of its composition. It can be best explained on the supposition that it refers to the desolations caused by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar.

The psalm is properly divided into *three* parts, each closing with the prayer "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved," vers. 3, 7, 19.

I. The first part is a prayer, addressed to God as a shepherd—as one who had

PSALM LXXX.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-eduth. *i* A Psalm [1] of Asaph.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest *k* Joseph like a flock: *l* thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine *m* forth.

2 Before *n* Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy

i Ps. lx., *title.* [1] Or, *for.*
k Ps. xxiii. 1; lxxvii. 20.
l Ex. xxv. 20, 22; 2 Sam. vi. 2.
m Deut. xxxiii. 2. *n* Num. ii. 18—24.

led his people like a flock—that he would again shine forth on them now that they were in trouble, and that he would stir up his strength, and come and save them, vers. 1-3.

II. The second is a prayer, also,—founded on the troubles of his people; a people fed with their tears; a strife to their neighbours; and an occasion of laughter or mirth to their foes, vers. 4-7.

III. The third is also a prayer,—founded on the former dealings of God with his people, on his care for them in ancient times, and on the fact that they were now desolate;—their state being represented under the image of a vine brought from abroad; planted with care; attentively nurtured until it sent out its branches in every direction, so that it filled the land; and then broken down—torn—rent—trampled on—by a wild boar out of the wood, vers. 8-19. In view of this desolation the psalmist prays that God would interpose, and he pledges the assurance that if this were done for them, the people would no more go back from God.

1. *Give ear.* Incline the ear; as if the ear of God was then turned away, or as if he was inattentive to what was occurring. See Notes on Ps. v. 1. ¶ *O Shepherd of Israel.* See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 1. ¶ *Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.* Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 67. The name *Joseph* seems here to be used poetically to represent the whole people of Israel, as he was a man so prominent in their history, and *especially* as *Egypt* is mentioned as the country from which the vine had been transplanted,—a country where Joseph had acted so important a part, and in connexion with which his name would be so naturally associated. The meaning is, that God had led the tribes of the Hebrew people as a shepherd leads or conducts his flock. ¶ *Thou that dwellest* between *the cherubims.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 10. The allusion here is to God as dwelling, by a visible symbol—the Shechinah—on the mercy-seat, between the cherubims. Ex. xxv. 18, 22; xxxvii. 7; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 1 Kings vi. 25. See Notes on Isa. xxxvii. 16; and Heb. ix. 5. ¶ *Shine forth.* Manifest thyself. Let light come from thy presence in the midst of our darkness and calamity.

2. *Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh.* Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph, and their names were given to two of the tribes of Israel. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 67. They seem to have been particularly mentioned here, because *Joseph,* their father, had been referred to in the previous verse; and it was natural, in speaking of the people, to mention his sons. Benjamin is mentioned because, in the encampment and march through the wilderness, these three tribes always went together, *as the descendants of the same mother.* Gen. xlvi. 19, 20; Num. ii. 18-24; x. 22-24. It is probable that they were always peculiarly united in the great operations of the Hebrew people, and that when one was mentioned it was customary to mention the others, as being of the same family, or descended from the same mother. There does not appear, from the psalm itself, any particular reason why the prayer is offered that God would manifest himself especially to these *three* tribes; and nothing in regard to the occasion on which the psalm was composed, can be argued from the fact that they are thus mentioned. Hengstenberg indeed supposes that the common idea that the tribe of Benjamin adhered to Judah in the revolt of the

strength, and come [1] *and* save us.

3 Turn [o] us again, O God, and cause thy face [p] to shine; and we shall be saved.

[1] *for salvation to us.*

o ver. 7, 19; Lam. v. 21.
p Num. vi. 25.

ten tribes is erroneous, and that Benjamin was *one* of the ten tribes which revolted; and that Simeon was not included in the number because he had no separate territory, but only certain towns and places within the limits of the tribe of Judah. Prof. Alexander, embracing this opinion, supposes that the psalm refers to the calamities which came upon the ten tribes at the time of their captivity. But this supposition seems to me to be improbable. The obvious and fair interpretation of the narrative on the subject is, that the tribe of Benjamin adhered to that of Judah at the time of the revolt, for it is said (1 Kings xii. 21) that "when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, *with the tribe of Benjamin*, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon." Besides, even on the supposition that Benjamin was one of the ten revolted tribes, the fact that these three tribes are particularly mentioned together would not prove that the psalm referred to the carrying away of the ten tribes into Assyria, for still the question would arise why *these* are particularly mentioned rather than any other of the ten. It seems to me, therefore, that the fact that these are specified can be explained on the suppositions above suggested: (*a*) That the main reference in the psalm was to the coming out of Egypt—the bringing the "vine"—that is, the people—from that land (ver. 8); (*b*) That in alluding to that, it was natural to make mention of *Joseph*, who was so distinguished there, and who, after so many trials, was exalted to so great honour that his name might be given to the whole people; (*c*) That when Joseph had been spoken of, it was natural, in the progress of the psalm, to mention particularly the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh; and (*d*) that having mentioned them, it was natural also to refer to one whose name was always associated with that of Joseph as his younger brother by the same mother, and to the tribe of that name which was always associated with Ephraim and Manasseh in the march. I regard the psalm, therefore, as referring to the entire Hebrew people, and the names of these three tribes as representatives of the whole nation. The prayer is, that God would manifest himself in the presence of his people. ¶ *Stir up thy strength.* As if he were indifferent to their condition; as if he put forth no effort to save them. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 23. ¶ *And come* and *save us.* Marg., as in Heb., *come for salvation to us.* That is, Come and deliver us from our enemies and our dangers.

3. *Turn us again.* This phrase in our translation would seem to mean, "Turn us again from our sins,"—or, "Bring us back to our duty, and to thy love;" and this idea is commonly attached to the phrase probably by the readers of the Bible. But this, though in itself an appropriate prayer, is not the idea here. It is simply, *Bring us back; cause us to return; restore us.* The idea thus suggested would be either (*a*) Restore us to our former state of prosperity; that is, Cause these desolations to cease; or (*b*) Bring us back, as from captivity, to our own land; restore us to our country and our homes, from which we have been driven out. Thus understood, it would be properly the language of those who were in captivity or exile, praying that they might be restored again to their own land. ¶ *And cause thy face to shine.* Be favourable or propitious to us.

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou [1] be angry against the prayer of thy people?

5 Thou feedest them with the [q] bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

[1] *smoke*, Ps. lxxiv. 1.
q Ps. xlii. 3; Isa. xxx. 20.

6 Thou [r] makest us a strife unto our neighbours; and our enemies laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

r Ps. lxxix. 4.

Let the frown on thy countenance disappear. See Notes on Ps. iv. 6. ¶ *And we shall be saved.* Saved from our dangers; saved from our troubles. It is also true that when God causes his face to shine upon *us*, we shall be saved from our sins; saved from ruin. It is only by his smile and favour that we can be saved in any sense, or from any danger.

4. *O* LORD *God of hosts.* Jehovah, God of armies. That is either (*a*) the God who rules among the hosts of heaven—the inhabitants of that holy world; or (*b*) God of the hosts of the sky—the worlds above—the stars, that seem marshalled as hosts or armies, and that are led forth each night with such order and grandeur; or (*c*) God of the hosts on earth—the armies that are mustered for war. The phrase is one which is often applied to God. See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 10; and on Isa. i. 24. ¶ *How long wilt thou be angry.* Marg., as in Heb., *wilt thou smoke.* The allusion is derived from the comparison of anger with fire. See Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 1. ¶ *Against the prayer of thy people.* That is, Thou dost not answer their prayer; thou seemest to be angry against them even when they pray; or in the act of calling upon thee. The earnest inquiry here is, *how long* this was to continue. It *seemed* as if it would never end. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 7-9.

5. *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears.* Literally, "Thou causest them to eat the bread of tears," or of weeping. That is, their food was accompanied with tears; even when they ate, they wept. Their tears seemed to moisten their bread, they flowed so copiously. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 3. ¶ *And givest them tears to drink.* So abundant were their tears that they might constitute their very drink. ¶ *In great measure.* Or rather *by measure;* that is, abundantly. The word here rendered *great measure*—שָׁלִישׁ, *shalish*—means properly *a third,* and is usually applied to a measure for grain—a *third part* of another measure—as, the third part of an ephah. See Notes on Isa. xl. 12. Then the word is used for *any* measure, perhaps because this was the most common measure in use. The idea seems to be, not so much that God gave tears to them in *great* measure, but that he *measured* them out to them, as one measures drink to others; that is, the cup, or cask, or bottle in which their drink was served to them was as if filled with tears only.

6. *Thou makest us a strife.* An occasion of strife or wrangling; that is, of strife among themselves, to see who will get the most of our spoils; or of contention, to see which could do most to aggravate their sufferings, and to bring disgrace and contempt upon them. They were emulous with each other in the work of desolation and ruin. ¶ *Unto our neighbours.* The surrounding nations. See Ps. lxxix. 4. ¶ *And our enemies laugh among themselves.* Over our calamities. They exult; they glory; they triumph in our ruin.

7. *Turn us again, O God of hosts,* etc. This verse is the same as ver. 3, except that here the appeal is to the "God of hosts;" there, it is simply to "God." This indicates greater earnestness; a deeper sense of the need of the interposition of God, indicated by the reference to his attri-

8 Thou hast brought a vine [s] out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the [1] goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that [t] all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

[s] Isa. v. 1–7; Jer. ii. 21.

[1] *cedars of God.* [t] Nahum ii. 2.

bute as the leader of hosts or armies, and therefore able to save them.

8. *Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt.* Referring to his people, under the image (which often occurs in the Scriptures) of a vine or vineyard. See Notes on Isa. v. 1–7. Comp. Jer. ii. 21; Ezek. xv. 6; Matt. xx. 1; xxi. 28, 33; Luke xiii. 6. ¶ *Thou hast cast out the heathen.* The nations; to wit, the nations that occupied the land of Canaan before the children of Israel dwelt there. See Notes on Ps. ii. 1, 8; lxxvii. 55. ¶ *And planted it.* Thou hast established thy people there as one plants a vine in a field. See Ps. xliv. 2.

9. *Thou preparedst* room *before it.* The Hebrew word here used means properly to turn; to turn the back; then, to turn in order to look at anything; to look upon; to see; then, in Piel, to cause to turn away; to remove. Then it comes to mean to remove, or to clear from impediments so as to prepare a way (Isa. xl. 3; lvii. 14; lxii. 10; Mal. iii. 1), and hence to remove the impediments to planting a vine, etc.; to wit, by clearing away the trees, brush, stones, etc. Comp. Isa. v. 2. Here it means that the hindrances in planting the vine were taken out of the way; that is, God removed the heathen so that there was room then to establish his own people. ¶ *And didst cause it to take deep root.* Heb., "And didst cause it to root roots;" that is, Its roots struck deep into the soil, and the plant became firm. ¶ *And it filled the land.* Its branches ran everywhere, so as to fill the whole land. See Notes on Isa. xvi. 8.

10. *The hills were covered with the shadow of it.* That is, It made a shade, by its luxuriant foliage, on the hills in every part of the land; it seemed to cover all the hills. ¶ *And the boughs thereof* were like *the goodly cedars.* Marg., as in Heb., *cedars of God;* that is, lofty, majestic cedars. See Notes on Ps. lxv. 9. The reference here is to the cedars of Lebanon, among the most majestic objects known to the Hebrews.

11. *She sent out her boughs unto the sea.* To the Mediterranean Sea on the one side. ¶ *And her branches.* Her *sucklings.* The word is usually applied to little children, and means here the little branches that are nourished by the parent vine. ¶ *Unto the river.* The Euphrates, for so *the river* usually means in the Scriptures. The Euphrates on the one side, and the Mediterranean Sea on the other, were the natural and proper boundaries of the country as promised to Abraham. See Ps. lxxii. 8; 1 Kings iv. 21. Comp. Notes on Ps. lx.

12. *Why hast thou* then *broken down her hedges?* Why hast thou dealt with thy people as one would with a vineyard who should break down all its enclosures, and leave it open to wild beasts? The word rendered *hedges* means wall or enclosure. Comp. Notes on Isa. v. 2. ¶ *So that all they which pass by the way.* All travellers; or, wild beasts. So that there is nothing to prevent their coming up to the vine and plucking the grapes. ¶ *Do pluck her.* Pluck, or pick off the grapes; or, if the phrase "all which pass by the way" denotes wild beasts, then the meaning is, that they

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look [u] down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

[u] Isa. lxiii. 15.

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the [v] branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burned with fire; *it is* cut down: they perish [w] at the rebuke of thy countenance.

[v] Isa. xi. 1, etc.; Zec. iii. 8. [w] Ps. lxxvi. 7.

eat off the leaves and branches of the vine.

13. *The boar out of the wood.* Men come in and ravage the land, whose character may be compared with the wild boar. The word rendered *boar* means simply *swine.* The addition of the phrase "out of the wood" determines its meaning here, and shows that the reference is to wild or untamed swine; swine that roam the woods,—an animal always extremely fierce and savage. ¶ *Doth waste it.* The word here used occurs nowhere else. It means to cut down or cut off; to devour; to lay waste. ¶ *And the wild beast of the field.* Of the uninclosed field; or, that roams at large,—such as lions, panthers, tigers, wolves. The word here used—זִיז *ziz*—occurs besides only in Ps. l. 11; and Isa. lxvi. 11. In Isa. lxvi. 11, it is rendered *abundance.* ¶ *Doth devour it.* So the people from abroad consumed all that the land produced, or thus they laid it waste.

14. *Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts.* Again come and visit thy people; come back again to thy forsaken land. This is language founded on the idea that God had withdrawn from the land, or had forsaken it; that he had left his people without a protector, and had left them exposed to the ravages of fierce foreign enemies. It is language which will describe what *seems* often to occur when the church is apparently forsaken; when there are no cheering tokens of the Divine presence; and when the people of God, discouraged, *seem* themselves to be forsaken by him. Comp. Jer. xiv. 8. ¶ *Look down from heaven.* The habitation of God. As if he did not now *see* his desolate vineyard, or regard it. The idea is, that if he would look upon it, he *would* pity it, and would come to its relief. ¶ *And behold, and visit this vine.* It is a visitation of mercy and not of wrath that is asked; the coming of one who is able to save, and without whose coming there could be no deliverance.

15. *And the vineyard,* etc. Gesenius renders this as a verb: "*Protect;*" that is, "Protect or defend what thy right hand hath planted." So the Septuagint renders it κατάρτισαι—and the Vulgate, *perfice,*—fit, prepare, order. Prof. Alexander renders it *sustain.* De Wette, "*Guard* what thy right hand hath planted." This is doubtless the true idea. It is a prayer that God would guard, sustain, defend what he had planted; to wit, the vine which he had brought out of Egypt, ver. 8. ¶ *And the branch.* Literally, *the son;* that is, the offspring or shoots of the vine. Not merely the original plant—the parent stock—but all the branches which had sprung from it, and which had spread themselves over the land. ¶ That *thou madest strong for thyself.* Thou didst cause it to grow so vigorously for thine own use or honour. On that account, we now call on thee to defend what is thine own.

16. It is *burned with fire.* That is, the vineyard. This is a description of the desolations that had come upon the nation, such as *would* come upon a vineyard if it were consumed by fire. ¶ It is *cut down.* It has been made desolate by fire and by the axe. ¶ *They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.* At the frown on thy face,—as if God has only to *look* upon men in anger, and they perish.

17 Let thy hand [x] be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken [y] us, and we will call upon thy name.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

[x] 1 Chron. iv. 10.

[y] Eph. ii. 1, 5.

The word *they* refers to those who were represented by the vine which had been brought out of Egypt—the people of the land.

17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand.* Luther renders this, "Let thy hand guard the folks of thy right hand, and the people whom thou hast powerfully chosen." The right hand is the place of honour; and the phrase "the man of thy right hand" means one who occupies such a position of honour. The phrase "Let thy hand be upon" is ambiguous. It may denote either favour or wrath;—let it be upon him either to protect him, or to punish him. The connexion, however, evidently demands the former interpretation, for it is in reference to the "man whom God had made strong for himself." The allusion is either (*a*) to some individual man whom God had raised up to honour, as a prince or ruler of the people; or (*b*) to the people as such,—as Luther understands it. Most probably the former is the correct interpretation; and the prayer is, that God would interpose in behalf of the ruler of the people—the king of the nation—whom he had exalted to so high honour, and whom he had placed in such a position of responsibility; that he would now endow him properly for his work; that he would give him wisdom in counsel, and valour in battle, in order that the nation might be delivered from its foes. It is, therefore, a prayer for the civil and military ruler of the land, that God would give him grace, firmness, and wisdom, in a time of great emergency. Prof. Alexander strangely supposes that this refers to the Messiah. ¶ *Upon the son of man.* This means simply *man*, the language being varied for the sake of poetry. Comp. Notes on Ps. viii. 4. It is true that the appellation "the Son of man" was a favourite designation which the Lord Jesus applied to himself to denote that he was truly a man, and to indicate his connexion with human nature; but the phrase is often used merely to denote a man. Here it refers to the king or civil ruler. ¶ Whom *thou madest strong for thyself.* The man whom thou hast raised up to that exalted station, and whom thou hast endowed to do a work for thee *in* that station. A magistrate is a servant and a representative of God, appointed to do a work for *him*—not for *himself.* See Rom. xiii. 1–6.

18. *So will not we go back from thee.* That is, if thou wilt thus interpose; if thou wilt deliver the nation; if thou wilt help him whom thou hast placed over it, giving him wisdom and valour, we will hereafter be obedient to thy law; we will not apostatize from thee. It is a solemn promise or pledge of future obedience made by the psalmist as expressing the purpose of the people if God would be merciful and would withdraw his judgments; a pledge proper in itself, and often made by the Hebrew people only to be disregarded; a pledge proper for all who are in affliction, and often made in such circumstances, but, as in the case of the Hebrews, often made only to be forgotten. ¶ *Quicken us.* Literally, *Give us life.* See Notes on Eph. ii. 1. Restore life to us as a people; save us from ruin, and reanimate us with thy presence. ¶ *And we will call upon thy name.* We will worship thee; we will be faithful in serving thee.

19. *Turn us again, O* LORD *God of hosts,* etc. See Notes on vers. 3, 7, 14. This is the sum and the burden

of the psalm. The repetition of the prayer shows the earnestness of the people, and their conviction that their only *hope* in their troubles was that *God* would interpose and bring them back again; that he would be favourable to them, and lift upon them the light of his countenance. So with all. In our backslidings, our afflictions, and our troubles, our only hope is that *God* will bring us back to himself; our proper place is at the throne of mercy; our pleadings should be urgent, earnest, and constant, that he will interpose and have mercy on us; our solemn purpose—our expressed and recorded pledge—should be that *if* we are restored to God, we will wander no more. But, alas! how much easier it is to *say* this than to *do* it; how much easier to promise than to perform; how much easier to pledge ourselves when we are in affliction that *if* the troubles are removed we will be faithful, than it is to carry out such a purpose when the days of prosperity return, and we are again surrounded by the blessings of health and of peace. If all men—even good men—*kept* the vows which they make, the world would be comparatively a pure and happy world; if the church itself would only carry out its own solemn pledges, it would indeed arise and shine, and the world would soon be filled with light and salvation.

PSALM LXXXI.

This psalm purports also to be a psalm of Asaph. See Introd. to Ps. lxxiii. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it may be assumed to have been composed *by* or *for* the Asaph who was the contemporary of David, and who was appointed by him to preside over the music of the sanctuary. Venema, indeed, supposes that the psalm was composed in the time of Josiah, at the observance of the great Passover celebrated by him (2 Chron. xxxv.); but there is no positive evidence of this, though there is nothing in the psalm that is inconsistent with such a supposition. On the phrase in the title, *upon Gittith*, see Notes on the title to Ps. viii.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed seems to have been a festal occasion, and the circumstances in the psalm will probably best accord with the supposition that it was the Feast of the Passover. Rosenmüller has indeed endeavoured to show (see his Notes on ver. 4) that it was composed on occasion of the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. xxiii. 24, *et seq.*); but there is nothing in the psalm which would necessarily restrict it to that, and, as we shall see, all the circumstances in the psalm harmonize with the supposition that it was at the Feast of the Passover, the principal and the most important festival of the Hebrews. It is well remarked by De Wette (Introd. to the psalm), that as the Hebrews were required to make known to their children the design of the ordinance of the Passover (see Ex. xii. 26, 27), nothing would be more natural than that the sacred poets should take occasion from the return of that festival to enforce the truths pertaining to it in songs composed for the celebration. Such seems to have been the design of this psalm,—reminding the people of the goodness of God in the past, and recalling them from their sins by a remembrance of his mercies, and by a view of what would be the consequences of fully obeying his law.

It would seem from the psalm not improbable that it was composed in a time of national declension in religion, and when there was a tendency to idolatry, and that the object of the author was to rouse the nation from that state, and to endeavour by a reference to the past to bring them back to a more entire devotedness to God.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. The duty of praise, particularly on such occasions as that on which the psalm was composed;—a duty enjoined even in Egypt, in the time of Joseph, when God delivered his people out of that strange land, vers. 1–7.

II. The main command which was then ordained to be the guide of the people—the fixed law of the nation—the fundamental idea in their polity,—that there was to be no strange god among them, but that they were to worship the true God, and him alone, vers. 8–10.

III. The fact that the nation had refused to hear; that there had been such a proneness to worship other gods, and to fall into the habits of idolaters,

PSALM LXXXI.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith. [z]
A Psalm [1] of Asaph.

SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day:

[z] Ps. viii., *title.* [1] Or, *for.*

that God had given them up to their own desires, and suffered them to walk in their own ways, vers. 11, 12.

IV. A statement of what God would have done for them if they had been obedient; of what would have been the effect on their national prosperity if they had hearkened to the commands of God; and consequently of what would still be the result if the people should be obedient, and submit themselves wholly to the law of God, vers. 13–16. Particularly—

(1) Their enemies would have been subdued, ver. 14.
(2) Those who hated the Lord would have yielded themselves to him, ver. 15.
(3) God would have given them abundant prosperity; he would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and would have satisfied them with honey out of the rock, ver. 16.

The psalm is of special importance to the church now, as reminding it of its obligation from the past mercies of God, and as showing what *would be* the consequences if it should be wholly devoted to the service of God.

1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength.* The strength and support of the nation; he from whom the nation has derived all its power. The word rendered *sing aloud* means to rejoice; and then, to make or cause to rejoice. It would be appropriate to a high festal occasion, where music constituted an important part of the public service. And it would be a proper word to employ in reference to any of the great feasts of the Hebrews. ¶ *Make a joyful noise.* A noise indicating joy, as distinguished from a noise of mourning or lamentation. ¶ *Unto the God of Jacob.* Not here particularly the God of the patriarch himself, but of the people who bore his name,—his descendants.

2. *Take a psalm.* Literally, "Lift up a psalm; perhaps, as we should say, "*Raise the tune.*" Or, it may mean, Take an ode, a hymn, a psalm, composed for the occasion, and accompany it with the instruments of music which are specified. ¶ *And bring hither the timbrel.* For the purpose of praise. On the meaning of this word rendered timbrel—*toph*—see Notes on Isa. v. 12. ¶ *The pleasant harp.* On the word here rendered *harp*—*kinnor*,—see also Notes on Isa. v. 12. The word translated *pleasant*—נָעִים, *naim*—means properly *pleasant, agreeable, sweet,* Ps. cxxxiii. 1; cxlvii. 1. It is connected here with the word *harp,* as meaning that that instrument was distinguished particularly for a sweet or pleasant sound. ¶ *With the psaltery.* On the meaning of the word here used—*nebel*—see Notes on Isa. v. 12. These were the common instruments of music among the Hebrews. They were employed alike on sacred occasions, and in scenes of revelry. See Isa. v. 12.

3. *Blow up the trumpet.* The word rendered *blow* means to make a clangour or noise as on a trumpet. The trumpet was, like the timbrel, the harp, and the psaltery, a common instrument of music, and was employed on all their festive occasions. It was at first made of horn, and then was made similar in shape to a horn. Comp. Josh. vi. 5; Lev. xxv. 9; Job xxxix. 25. ¶ *In the new moon.* On the festival held at the time of the new moon. There was a high festival on the appearance of the new moon in the month of Tisri, or October, which was the beginning of their civil year, and it is not improbable that the return of each new moon was celebrated with special services. See Notes on Isa. i. 13; comp. 2 Kings

4 For this [a] *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob.

5 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, when he went

[a] Lev. xxiii. 23, 24.

iv. 23; Amos viii. 5; 1 Chron. xxiii. 31; 2 Chron. ii. 4. It is not certain, however, that the word here used means *new moon*. Prof. Alexander renders it *in the month*; that is, in *the* month, by way of eminence, in which the passover was celebrated. The word used—חֹדֶשׁ, *khodesh* — means, indeed, commonly *the new moon*; the day of the new moon; the first day of the lunar month (Num. xxix. 6; 1 Sam. xx. 5, 18, 24); but it also means *a month*; that is, a lunar month, beginning at the new moon, Gen. viii. 5; Ex. xiii. 4; *et al.* The corresponding or parallel word, as we shall see, which is rendered in our version, *in the time appointed*, means *full moon*; and the probability is, as Professor Alexander suggests, that in the beginning of the verse the *month* is mentioned in general, and the particular time of the month—the full moon—in the other part of the verse. Thus the language is applicable to the passover. On the other supposition—the supposition that the *new moon* and the *full moon* are both mentioned—there would be manifest confusion as to the time. ¶ *In the time appointed.* The word here used—כֶּסֶה, *keseh*—means properly the full moon; the time of the full moon. In Syriac the word means either "the first day of the full moon," or "the whole time of the full moon." (Isa Bar Ali, as quoted by Gesenius, *Lex.*) Thus the word means, not as in our translation, *in the time appointed*, but *at the full moon*, and would refer to the time of the Passover, which was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the lunar month; that is, when the moon was at the full. Ex. xii. 6. ¶ *On our solemn feast day.* Heb., *In the day of our feast.* The word *solemn* is not necessarily in the original, though the day *was* one of great solemnity. The Passover is doubtless referred to.

4. *For this* was *a statute for Israel*, etc. See Ex. xii. 3. That is, it was a law for the whole Jewish people; for all who had the name *Israel*; for all the descendants of Jacob. The word *was* is not in the original, as if this had been an old commandment which might now be obsolete, but the idea is one of *perpetuity*:—it *is* a perpetual law for the Hebrew people. ¶ *A law of the God of Jacob.* Heb., *a judgment*; or, *right.* The idea is, that it was what was due to God; what was his right. It was a solemn *claim* that he should be thus acknowledged. It was not a matter of conventional arrangement, or a matter of convenience to them; nor was it to be observed merely because it was found to be expedient and conducive to the welfare of the nation. It was a matter of *right* and of *claim* on the part of God, and was so to be regarded by the nation. The same is true now of the Sabbath, and of all the appointments which God has made for keeping up religion in the world. All these arrangements are indeed expedient and proper; they conduce to the public welfare and to the happiness of man; but there is a higher reason for their observance than this. It is that *God demands* their observance; that he *claims* as his own the time so appropriated. Thus he claims the Sabbath, the entire Sabbath, *as his own*; he requires that it shall be employed in his service, that it shall be regarded as *his* day; that it shall be made instrumental in keeping up the knowledge of himself in the world, and in promoting his glory. Ex. xx. 10. Men, therefore, "rob God" (comp. Mal. iii. 8) when they take this time for needless secular purposes, or devote it to other ends and uses. Nor can this be sinless. The highest guilt which man can commit is to "rob" his Maker of what belongs to Him, and of what He claims.

5. *This he ordained in Joseph* for

out [1] through the land of Egypt; *where* I heard a language [b] *that* I understood not.

[1] Or, *against.* [b] Ps. cxiv. 1.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands [2] were delivered from the pots. [c]

[2] *passed away.* [c] Ex. i. 14.

a testimony. Literally, *he placed this;* that is, he appointed it. The word *Joseph* here stands for the whole Hebrew people, as in Ps. lxxx. 1. See Notes on that verse. The meaning is, that the ordinance for observing this festival—the Passover—was to be traced back to the time when they were in Egypt. The obligation to observe it was thus enhanced by the very antiquity of the observance, and by the fact that it was one of the direct appointments of God in that strange and foreign land. ¶ *When he went out through the land of Egypt.* Marg., *against.* Or rather, *In his going out of the land of Egypt.* Literally, *In going upon the land of Egypt.* The allusion is, undoubtedly, to the time when the Hebrews went out of the land of Egypt—to the *Exodus;* and the exact idea is, that, in doing this, they passed *over* a considerable portion of the land of Egypt; or, that they passed *over* the land. The idea in the margin, of its being *against* the land of Egypt, is not necessarily in the original. ¶ Where *I heard a language* that *I understood not.* Literally, "The lip [that is, the language] of one that I did not know, I heard." This refers, undoubtedly, not to God, but to the people. The author of this psalm identifies himself here with the people—the whole nation,—and speaks as if he were one of them, and as if he now *recollected* the circumstances at the time—the strange language—the foreign customs—the oppressions and burdens borne by the people. Throwing himself back, as it were, to that time (comp. Notes on 1 Thess. iv. 17),—he seems to himself to be in the midst of a people speaking a strange tongue—a language unintelligible to him—the language of a foreign nation. The Jews, in all their long captivity in Egypt—a period of four hundred years (see Notes on Acts vii. 6),—preserved their own language apparently incorrupt. So far as appears, they spoke the same language, without change, when they came out of Egypt, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had used. The Egyptian was entirely a foreign language to them, and had no affinity with the Hebrew.

6. *I removed his shoulder from the burden.* The burden which the people of Israel were called to bear in Egypt. The reference is undoubtedly to their burdens in making bricks, and conveying them to the place where they were to be used; and perhaps also to the fact that they were required to carry stone in building houses and towns for the Egyptians. Comp. Ex. i. 11–14; v. 4–17. The meaning is, that he had saved them from these burdens, to wit, by delivering them from their hard bondage. The speaker here evidently is God. In the previous verse it is the people. Such a change of person is not uncommon in the Scriptures. ¶ *His hands were delivered from the pots.* Marg., as in Heb., *passed away.* That is, they were *separated* from them, or made free. The word rendered *pots* usually has that signification. Job xli. 20; 1 Sam. ii. 14; 2 Chron. xxxv. 13; but it may also mean *a basket.* Jer. xxiv. 2; 2 Kings x. 7. The latter is probably the meaning here. The allusion is to *baskets* which might have been used in carrying clay, or conveying the bricks after they were made:—perhaps a kind of hamper that was swung over the shoulders, with clay or bricks in each,—somewhat like the instrument used now by the Chinese in carrying tea,—or like the neck-yoke which is employed in carrying sap where maple sugar is manufactured, or milk on dairy farms. There are many representations on Egyptian sculptures which would illustrate this. The idea is that of a

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; I proved [d] thee at the waters of [1] Meribah. Selah.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

10 I [e] *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the

d Ex. xvii. 2—7. [1] Or, *strife*. *e* Ex. xx. 2.

burden, or task, and the allusion is to the deliverance that was accomplished by removing them to another land.

7. *Thou calledst in trouble.* The people of Israel. Ex. ii. 23; iii. 9; xiv. 10. ¶ *And I delivered thee.* I brought the people out of Egypt. ¶ *I answered thee in the secret place of thunder.* That is, in the lonely, retired, solemn place where the thunder rolled; the solitudes where there was no voice but the voice of thunder, and where that seemed to come from the deep recesses of the mountain gorges. The allusion is doubtless to Sinai. Comp. Ex. xix. 17–19. The meaning is, that he gave a response—a real reply—to their prayer—amid the solemn scenes of Sinai, when he gave them his law; when he recognized them as his people; when he entered into covenant with them. ¶ *I proved thee.* I tried you; I tested your fidelity. ¶ *At the waters of Meribah.* Marg., as in Heb., *strife.* This was at Mount Horeb. Ex. xvii. 5–7. The *trial*—the *proof*—consisted in his bringing water from the rock, showing that he was God—that he was *their* God.

8. *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee,* etc. See Notes on the similar passage in Ps. l. 7. God calls their attention to what he required of them; to what his law demanded; to what was the condition of their being his people and of securing his favour. What he demanded was, that they should acknowledge him; obey him; serve him; that there should be no strange god among them, and that they should worship no false god, ver. 9.

9. *There shall no strange god be in thee.* Worshipped by thee; or recognised and regarded as a god. This was a condition of his favour and friendship. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 12; Isa. xliii. 12. The word here rendered *strange*—זָר, *zar*—has reference to one of a foreign nation; and the meaning is, that they were not to worship or adore the gods that were worshipped by foreigners. This was a fundamental law of the Hebrew commonwealth. ¶ *Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.* The Hebrew word here is different—נֵכָר, *naikar*—but means substantially the same thing. The allusion is to gods worshipped by foreign nations.

10. *I* am *the* LORD *thy God,* etc. See Ex. xx. 2. The meaning is, "I am Jehovah, *thy* God; the God to be worshipped and honoured by thee; I *only* am thy God, and no other god is to be recognised or acknowledged by thee." The foundation of the claim to exclusive service and devotion is here laid in the fact that he had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Literally, had caused them to *ascend,* or *go up* from that land. The claim thus asserted seems to be twofold: (*a*) That in doing this, he had shown that he *was* God, or that he had performed a work which none but God could perform, and had thus shown his existence and power; and (*b*) that by this he had brought them under peculiar obligations to himself, inasmuch as they owed all that they had—their national existence and liberty—entirely to him. ¶ *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Possibly* an allusion to young birds, when fed by the parent-bird. The meaning here is, "I can amply supply all your wants. You need not go to other gods—the gods of other lands—as if there were any deficiency in

land of Egypt: open [f] thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

11 But [g] my people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me.

12 So [h] I gave them up [1] unto

[f] John xv. 7. [g] Deut. xxxii. 15, 18. [h] Acts vii. 42.

their own hearts' lust; *and* they walked in their own counsels.

13 Oh [i] that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

[1] Or, *to the hardness of their own hearts*, or, *imaginations*.
[i] Isa. xlviii. 18; Deut. xxxii. 29.

my power or resources; as if *I* were not able to meet your necessities. *All* your wants I can meet. Ask what you need—what you will; come to me and make *any* request with reference to yourselves as individuals or as a nation—to this life or the life to come—and you will find in me an abundant supply for all your wants, and a willingness to bless you commensurate with my resources." What is here said of the Hebrews may be said of the people of God at all times. There is not a want of our nature—of our bodies or our souls; a want pertaining to this life or the life to come—to ourselves, to our families, to our friends, to the church, or to our country—which God is not *able* to meet; and there is not a *real* necessity in any of these respects which he is not *willing* to meet. Why, then, should his people ever turn for happiness to the "weak and beggarly elements of the world" (comp. Notes on Gal. iv. 9), *as if* God could not satisfy them? Why should they seek for happiness in vain amusements, or in sensual pleasures, *as if* God *could* not, or *would* not, supply the real wants of their souls?

11. *But my people*, etc. See Ps. lxxviii. 10, 11, 17–19. ¶ *And Israel would none of me.* Literally, "Did not *will* me;" that is, "did not incline to me; were not attached to me; were not disposed to worship me, and to find happiness in me." Comp. Isa. i. 19; Job xxxix. 9; Prov. i. 25. They refused or rejected him. See Ex. xxxii. 1; Deut. xxxii. 15, 18.

12. *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust.* Marg., as in Heb., *to the hardness of their own hearts.* Literally, "I sent them, or I dismissed them, to the hardness of their hearts." I suffered them to have what, in the hardness of their hearts they desired, or what their hard and rebellious hearts prompted them to desire. I indulged them in their wishes. I gave them what they asked, and left them to themselves to work out the problem about success and happiness in their own way,—to let them *see* what must be the result of forsaking the true God. The world—and the church too—has been often suffered to make this experiment. ¶ And *they walked in their own counsels.* As they thought wise and best. Comp. Acts vii. 42; xiv. 16; Rom. i. 24; Ps. lxxviii. 26–37.

13. *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me.* This passage is designed *mainly* to show what would have been the consequences if the Hebrew people had been obedient to the commands of God, vers. 14–16. At the same time, however, it expresses what was the earnest desire—the wish—the *preference* of God, viz., that they *had* been obedient, and *had* enjoyed his favour. This is in accordance with all the statements, all the commands, all the invitations, all the warnings, in the Bible. In the entire volume of inspiration there is not one command addressed to men to walk in the ways of sin; there is not one statement that God desires they should do it; there is not one intimation that he wishes the death of the sinner. The contrary is implied in all the declarations which God has made,—in all his commands, warnings, and invitations,—in all his arrangements for the salvation of men. See Deut. v. 29; xxxii. 29, 30; Isa. xlviii. 18; Ezek. xviii. 23, 32; xxxiii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 9; Luke xix. 42. ¶ And *Israel had walked in my*

14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

15 The haters of the LORD should have [1] submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

16 He should have fed them

[1] *lied*, or, *yielded feigned obedience*, Ps. lxvi. 3.

ways! Had kept my commandments; had been obedient to my laws. When men, therefore, do *not* walk in the ways of God it is impossible that they should take refuge, as an excuse for it, in the plea that God desires this, *or* that he commands it, *or* that he is pleased with it, *or* that he approves it. There is no possible sense in which this can be true; in every sense, and on every account, he prefers that men should be obedient, and not disobedient; good, and not bad; happy, and not miserable; saved, and not lost. Every doctrine of theology should be held and interpreted in *consistency* with this as a fundamental truth. That there are things which are difficult to be explained on the supposition that this is true, must be admitted; but what truth is there in reference to which there are not difficulties to be explained? And is there anything in this, or in any of the truths of the Bible, which *more* demands explanation than the *facts* which are actually occurring under the government of God:—the *fact* that sin and misery have been allowed to come into the universe; the *fact* that multitudes constantly suffer whom God could at once relieve?

14. *I should soon have subdued their enemies.* This is one of the consequences which, it is said, would have followed if they had been obedient to the laws of God. The phrase rendered *soon* means literally *like a little;* that is, as we might say, *in a little,* to wit, in a little time. The word rendered *subdued* means to bow down; to be curved or bent; and the idea is, that he would have caused them to bow down, to wit, by submission before them. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 29, 30. ¶ *And turned my hand against their adversaries.* Against those who oppressed and wronged them. The act of turning the hand *against* one is significant of putting him away—repelling him—disowning him—as when we would thrust one away from us with aversion.

15. *The haters of the* LORD. The enemies of the Lord, often represented as those who *hate* him,—hatred being always in fact or in form connected with an unwillingness to submit to God. It is hatred of his law; hatred of his government; hatred of his plans; hatred of his character. See Rom. i. 30; John vii. 7; xv. 18; 23–25. Comp. Ex. xx. 5. ¶ *Should have submitted themselves unto him.* Marg., *yielded feigned obedience.* Heb., *lied.* See the phrase explained in the Notes on Ps. xviii. 44. The meaning is, that they would have been so subdued as to *acknowledge* his authority or supremacy, while it is, at the same time, implied that this would have been *forced* and not *cordial.* No external power, though it may so conquer as to make men outwardly obedient, can affect the *will,* or subdue *that.* The grace of God *alone* can do that, and it is the peculiar triumph of grace that it *can* do it. ¶ *But their time.* The time of his people. They would have continued to be a happy and a flourishing nation. ¶ *Should have endured for ever.* Perpetually,—*as long as they continued to be obedient.* If a nation were obedient to the will of God; if it wholly obeyed his laws; if it countenanced by statute no form of sin; if it protected no iniquity; if it were temperate, just, virtuous, honest, there is no reason why its institutions should not be perpetual, or why it should ever be overthrown. Sin is, in all cases, the cause of the ruin of nations, as it is of individuals.

16. *He should have fed them also.* He would have given them prosperity.

also with the [1] finest of the wheat: and with honey [k] out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

[1] *fat.*

[k] Deut. xxxii. 13.

and their land would have produced abundantly of the necessities—even of the luxuries—of life. This is in accordance with the usual promises of the Scriptures, that obedience to God will be followed by national temporal prosperity. See Deut. xxxii. 13, 14; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Ps. xxxvii. 11. Comp. Notes on Matt. v. 5. ¶ *With the finest of the wheat.* Marg., as in Heb., *with the fat of wheat.* The meaning is, the best of the wheat,—as the words *fat* and *fatness* are often used to denote excellence and abundance. Gen. xxvii. 28, 39; Job xxxvi. 16; Ps. xxxvi. 8; lxiii. 5; lxv. 11. ¶ *And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.* Palestine abounded with bees, and honey was a favourite article of food. Gen. xliii. 11; Deut. viii. 8; xxxii. 13; 1 Sam. xiv. 25, 26; Isa. vii. 15; Ezek. xvi. 13; Matt. iii. 4. Much of that which was obtained was wild honey, deposited by the bees in the hollows of trees, and as it would seem in the caverns of the rocks. Much of it was gathered also from rocky regions, and this was regarded as the most delicate and valuable. I do not know the cause of this, nor why honey in high and rocky countries should be more pure and white than that obtained from other places; but the whitest and the most pure and delicate honey that I have ever seen I found at Chamouni in Switzerland. Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. ii. p. 362) says of the rocky region in the vicinity of Timnath, that "bees were so abundant in a wood at no great distance from this spot that the honey dropped down from the trees on the ground;" and that "he explored densely-wooded gorges in Hermon and in Southern Lebanon where wild bees are still found, both in trees and in the clefts of the rocks." The meaning here is plain, that, if Israel had been obedient to God, he would have blessed them with abundance—with the richest and most coveted productions of the field. Pure religion—obedience to God—morality — temperance, purity, honesty, and industry, such as religion requires—are always eminently favourable to individual and national prosperity; and if a man or a nation desired to be most prospered, most successful in the lawful and proper objects of individual or national existence, and most happy, nothing would tend more to conduce to it than those virtues which piety enjoins and cultivates. Individuals and nations, even in respect to temporal prosperity, are most unwise, as well as most wicked, when they disregard the laws of God, and turn away from the precepts and the spirit of religion. It is true of nations, as it is of individuals, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is," 1 Tim. iv. 8.

PSALM LXXXII.

This, too, is a "Psalm of Asaph." See Introd. to Psalm lxxiii. There is nothing, however, in its contents to determine the time or the occasion of its being composed, although there is no difficulty in ascertaining the *design* for which it was written, or the use to be made of it. It is intended to state the duties and the responsibilities of magistrates or civil rulers. Though the *language* is such as was adapted peculiarly to the Hebrew magistracy, and to the duties of magistrates as specified in the Jewish law, yet the *principles* are such as should guide magistrates at all times and in all countries; and the *truths* suggested are such as are eminently worthy the attention of all who are entrusted with authority.

The psalm was evidently composed at a time when there was much that was unjust and oppressive in the administration of justice; when the magistrates were corrupt; when they could be bribed; when they were forgetful of their obligation to defend the poor and the fatherless—the afflicted and the

PSALM LXXXII.

A Psalm of [1] Asaph.

GOD standeth in the congrega-

[1] Or, *for.*

tion of the mighty: he [1] judgeth among the gods.

l 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7.

needy; when manifest consequences of the evil administration of justice prevailed in the land, and "all the foundations of the earth" seemed to be "out of course;" and when those in power were haughty and arrogant, *as if* they were not men, and were not to die. De Wette supposes that the psalm was composed in the time of the Babylonish exile, and had reference to the conduct of the oppressive rulers in that land; but it is not necessary to suppose this. There were doubtless many occasions in the history of the Hebrew people when all that is here said of the conduct of their rulers and judges was applicable to *them.* Comp. Isa. i. 17, 23, 26.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. A reference to God as the Supreme Ruler;—the Ruler of those that rule;—the God to whom all magistrates, however exalted in rank, are responsible, ver. 1.

II. A reference to the *character* of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written, as those who judged unjustly; who were partial in the administration of justice; and who favoured men of rank and position, ver. 2.

III. A statement of the *duties* of magistrates, in reference particularly to the poor, the fatherless, the needy, and the afflicted, vers. 3, 4.

IV. A further statement in regard to the character of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written, particularly as ignorant, and as walking in darkness, ver. *5.*

V. A solemn appeal to them as mortal men—as subject to death like others,—though they had a rank which entitled them to the appellation of "*gods,*" and were the representatives of the Most High on earth, vers. 6, 7.

VI. A call on God to arise and to execute judgment in the earth, for he was the Supreme Ruler, and the nations, with all their interests, pertained to him, ver. 8.

1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.* In the assembly of the rulers and judges; among those of most exalted rank and station. He is there to observe them; to give them law; to direct their decisions; to judge *them.* He is supreme over them; and he holds them responsible to himself. The word rendered *congregation* is that which is commonly applied to the *assembly* of the people of Israel, considered as an organized body, or as a body politic. It here, however, refers to magistrates considered as a *body* or *class* of men; as those who have assemblages or meetings, with special reference to their duties *as* magistrates. The word rendered *mighty*—אֵל, *ēl*—is in the singular number, and is one of the names which are given to God; hence the literal rendering is, "God standeth in the assembly of God." The Septuagint renders it, *In the synagogue of the gods.* So also the Latin Vulgate. The reference, however, is undoubtedly to magistrates, and the idea is, that they were to be regarded as representatives of God; as acting in his name; and as those, therefore, to whom, in a subordinate sense, the name *gods* might be given. Comp. ver. 6. In Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28, also, the same word in the plural is applied to magistrates, and is properly translated *judges* in our common version. Comp. Notes on John x. 34, 35. The idea is, that they were the representatives of the Divine sovereignty in the administration of justice. Comp. Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 6. They were, in a sense, *gods* to other men; but they were not to forget that God stood among them as *their* God; that if they were exalted to a high rank in respect to their fellowmen, they were, nevertheless, subject to One to whom the name of God belonged in the highest sense. ¶ *He judgeth among the gods.* As they to whom the name *gods* is thus given as the representatives of the Divine sovereignty judged among men, so

2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

3 [1] Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice [m] to the afflicted and needy.

4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

5 They know not, neither will they understand: they walk on in [n] darkness: all the [o] founda-

[1] *Judge.* [m] Jer. xxii. 3. [n] John xii. 35. [o] Ps. lxxv. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

God would judge among them. If they were, in some sense (in consequence of their representing the Divine majesty, and deriving their power and appointment from God), independent of men, they were in no sense independent of God himself.

2. *How long will ye judge unjustly.* Literally, *Judge evil.* This is designed, evidently, to denote the prevailing character of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written. Unhappily such occasions occur very often in the course of human affairs. ¶ *And accept the persons of the wicked?* Literally, *Lift up* [or *bear*] *the faces of the wicked.* The meaning is, that they showed favour or partiality to wicked men; they did not decide cases according to truth, but were influenced by a regard for particular persons on account of their rank, their position, their wealth, or their relation to themselves. This is a common phrase in the Scriptures to denote favouritism or partiality. Job xxxiv. 19; Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 17; Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 17.

3. *Defend the poor and fatherless.* Literally, *judge;* that is, Pronounce just judgment; see that right is done to them. This is required everywhere in the Scriptures. The meaning is not that judgment is to be pronounced in their favour *because* they are poor, or *because* they are orphans, for this would be to do what they had just been charged with as in itself wrong, *accepting* of *persons;* that is, showing favour on account of condition or rank, rather than on account of a just claim. The idea is, that the poor and the fatherless, having no natural protectors, were likely to be wronged or oppressed; that they had none to defend their claims; and that magistrates, therefore, as if *they* were their natural protectors, should see that their rights were maintained. See Notes on Isa. i. 17. ¶ *Do justice to the afflicted and needy.* See that justice is done them; that they are not wronged by persons of wealth, of power, and of rank. Such care does religion take of those who have no natural guardians. The poor and the needy—the widow and the fatherless—owe to the religion of the Bible a debt which no language can express.

4. *Deliver the poor and needy.* That is, Deliver them from the power and the arts of those who would oppress and wrong them. This would not be showing them partiality; it would be simply doing them justice. ¶ *Rid* them *out of the hand of the wicked.* Deliver, or Rescue them from their hands; that is, from their attempts to oppress and wrong them.

5. *They know not, neither will they understand.* This is designed still further to characterise the magistrates at the time referred to in the psalm. They not merely judged unjustly, and were not merely partial in the administration of justice (ver. 2), but they did not desire to understand their duty, and the true principles on which justice should be administered. They were at no pains to inform themselves, either in regard to those principles, or in regard to the facts in particular cases. All just judgment must be based (*a*) on a true knowledge of what the law is, or what is right; and (*b*) on a knowledge of the facts in a particular case. Where there is no such knowledge, of course there must be a mal-administration of justice. One of the first requisites, therefore, in a magistrate is, that he

tions of the earth [1] are out of course.

6 I have said, Ye *are* gods;

[1] *moved.* [p] John x. 34, 35.

[p] and all of you *are* children of the Most High:

7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

shall have a proper knowledge of the law; his duty is to ascertain the exact *facts* in each individual case that comes before him, and then impartially to apply the law to that case. ¶ *They walk on in darkness.* In ignorance of the law and of the facts in the case. ¶ *All the foundations of the earth.* See Notes on Ps. xi. 3; lxxv. 3. All settled principles; all the things on which the welfare of society rests; all on which the prosperity of the world depends. The manner in which justice is administered is as if the very foundations of the earth should be disturbed, and the world should move without order. ¶ *Are out of course.* Marg., as in Heb., *moved.* That is, they are moved from their proper place; the earth no longer rests firmly and safely on its foundation. This language is taken from the idea so often occurring in the Scriptures, and in the language of men generally, that the earth rests on solid foundations—as a building does. The idea is derived from the stability and fixedness of the earth, and from the fact that when a building is fixed and stable we infer that it has a solid foundation. The thought here is, that a proper administration of justice is essential to the stability and prosperity of a state,—*as* essential as a solid foundation is to the stability of the edifice which is reared on it. The effect of a mal-administration of justice in any community may be well compared with what the result would be if the foundations of the earth should be removed, or if the laws which now keep it in its place should cease to operate.

6. *I have said, Ye* are *gods.* See Notes on ver. 1. I have given you this title; I have conferred on you an appellation which indicates a greater *nearness* to God than any other which is bestowed on men,—an appellation which implies that you are God's representatives on earth, and that your decision is, in an important sense, to be regarded as his. ¶ *And all of you* are *children of the Most High.* Sons of God. That is, You occupy a rank which makes it proper that you should be regarded as his sons.

7. *But ye shall die like men.* You are mortal, like other men. This fact you have forgotten. You have been lifted up with pride, as if you were in fact more exalted than other men; as if you were not subject to the law which consigns all men to the grave. An ancient monarch directed his servant to address him each morning in this language: "Remember, sire, that thou art mortal." No more salutary truth can be impressed on the minds of the rich and the great than that they are, in this respect, like other men—like the poorest, the meanest of the race:—that they will die under similar forms of disease; that they will experience the same pain; that all which is fearful in death will be their portion as well as that of the most obscure; and that in the grave, with whatever pomp and splendour they descend to it, or however magnificent the monument which may be reared over the spot where they lie, there will be the same offensive and repulsive process of decay which occurs in the most humble grave in the country churchyard. Why, then—oh, why—should man be proud? ¶ *And fall like one of the princes.* And *die* as one of the princes. The idea in the word *fall* may be, perhaps, that they would die by the hand of violence,—or be cut down, as princes often are, *e. g.* in battle. The use of the word *princes* here denotes that they would die as other persons of exalted rank do; that is, that they were mortal as all

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou [q] shalt inherit all nations.

[q] Rev. xi. 15.

men, high and low, are—as common men are, and as princes are. Though they had names—*El*, and *Elohim*—that suggested the idea of divinity, yet such appellations did not make any real change in their condition as men, and as subject to the ordinary laws under which men live. Whatever name they bore, it did not afford any security against death.

8. *Arise, O God, judge the earth.* That is, Since there is such a failure in the administration of justice by those to whom it appertains, and who are appointed to do it in thy stead, do thou, O God, come forth thyself, and see that justice is executed among men. Do thou take the matter into thine own hands, and see that impartial justice is done everywhere among men. It pertains to thee as the great Proprietor of the earth to exercise justice; and we have nowhere else to look when men fail to do their duty. ¶ *For thou shalt inherit all nations.* Or rather, All nations belong to thee as thine inheritance; that is, as thine own. The word *inherit* is used here, as it often is, merely to denote possession or proprietorship, without reference to the question *how* the possession is obtained. The word strictly refers to what has been received from parents, or what men are heirs to; and, in this sense, it is commonly applied to the land of Palestine, either as what was derived by the Jewish people from their ancestors the patriarchs, or as what they had received from God as a Father. Ex. xxxii. 13; Deut. i. 38; xii. 10. It is here used simply in the sense of *possessing* it. That is, the whole earth belonged to God, and the administration of its affairs pertained to him. As those had failed who had been appointed under him to the office of judges,—as they had not been faithful to their trust,—as no confidence could be reposed in them,—the psalmist calls upon God to interfere, either by appointing other magistrates; or by leading those who were *in* office to just views of their duty; or by his own direct judgments, punishing the wicked, and rewarding the righteous, by the interpositions of his providence. We may hence learn (1) That there are times on earth when wickedness is so prevalent, and when there is such a want of faithfulness in civil rulers, that we have no other resource but to call upon God to interpose. (2) That it is right to call upon Him to see that justice should be done in the earth even in the punishment of the guilty, since all the interests of society depend on the proper administration of justice. (3) For the same reason it is right to pray that God would judge the world, and that justice may be done on the human race. It is desirable and proper that justice should be done; hence there is no malignity in desiring that there may be a universal judgment, and that the affairs of the universe should be placed on an equal and righteous foundation. It is *possible* that there may be a just and holy joy at the idea that justice *is* done, and that God shows himself the friend of truth, of order, and of law. Comp. Notes on Ps. lviii. 10; Rev. xix. 1–3.

PSALM LXXXIII.

This is another of the psalms of Asaph, the last of the group or collection that is found under his name. Comp. the Introd. to Psalm lxxiii. The occasion on which this was composed is not certainly known, and cannot now be ascertained. Grotius supposes that it relates to the time of David, and especially to the first war with the Syrians referred to in 2 Sam. viii., or to the second war with the Syrians referred to in 2 Sam. x., and 1 Chron. xix. Kimchi, De Wette, and others, suppose that it relates to the time of Jehoshaphat, and to the war with the Ammonites and Moabites, referred to in 2 Chron. xx. Hengstenberg and Prof. Alexander concur in this opinion, and suppose that it was written on the same occasion as Ps. xlvii. and xlviii.;—the first, composed and sung on

PSALM LXXXIII.

A Song *or* Psalm [1] of Asaph.

KEEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a [r] tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden [s] ones.

[1] Or, *for.* [r] Isa. xxxvii. 29. [s] Ps. xxxi. 20.

the field of battle; the second, on the triumphant return to Jerusalem; the third—the one before us—in confident anticipation of victory. This is, perhaps, rather fanciful, and it certainly cannot be demonstrated that this is the correct opinion. It would seem, at least, to be hardly probable that a psalm would be composed and sung in a battle-field.

All that is certain in regard to the psalm is, that it was written in view of a threatened invasion by combined armies, and the prayer is, that God would give help, as he had done when the nation had been threatened on other occasions. The nations which were combined, or which had formed an alliance for this purpose, are specified in vers. 6–8;—Edom; Ishmael; Moab; the Hagarenes; Gebal; Ammon; Amalek; the Philistines; the Tyrians, Assur, and the children of Lot.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:—

I. A prayer that God would no longer keep still, or be silent, ver. 1.

II. A statement of the occasion for the prayer, to wit, the conspiracy or combination formed against his people, vers. 2–5.

III. An enumeration of the nations thus combined, vers. 6–8.

IV. A prayer that God would interpose as he had done in former times, in critical periods of the Jewish history,—as in the case of the Midianites; as in the time of Sisera, and Jabin; and as in the wars waged with Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, vers. 9-12.

V. A prayer that these enemies might be utterly overthrown and confounded; that God would promote his own glory; and that his people might be secure and happy, vers. 13–18.

1. *Keep not thou silence, O God.* See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 1. The prayer here is that in the existing emergency God would not seem to be indifferent to the wants and dangers of his people, and to the purposes of their enemies, but that he would *speak* with a voice of command, and break up their designs. ¶ *Hold not thy peace.* That is, *Speak.* Give command. Disperse them by thine own authority. ¶ *And be not still, O God.* Awake; arouse; be not indifferent to the wants and dangers of thy people. All this is the language of *petition;* not of *command.* Its rapidity, its repetition, its tone, all denote that the danger was imminent, and that the necessity for the Divine interposition was urgent.

2. *For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult.* Are excited; are aroused; are moving in a wild, furious, tumultuous manner, rushing on to the accomplishment of their designs. They come like rolling waves of the sea. See the word here used explained in the Notes on Ps. ii. 1, where it is rendered, in the text, *rage;* in the margin, *tumultuously assemble.* ¶ *And they that hate thee.* Thine enemies; the enemies of thy cause, and of thy people. Who they were is specified in vers. 6–8. ¶ *Have lifted up the head.* Have become proud; bold; confident of success,—all of which is indicated by the phrase *lifted up the head.* The head is bowed down in penitence and trouble; pride lifts it up; boldness, confidence, and wickedness, are indicated by its being thus lifted up.

3. *They have taken crafty counsel.* The one word translated *have taken crafty*—עָרַם, *aram*—means properly to make naked; and then, to be crafty, cunning, malignant, 1 Sam. xxiii. 22. It is well rendered here, *they have taken crafty* counsel. The meaning is, they have *made* their counsel or their consultations crafty, cunning, artful, malignant. Instead of pursuing a course in their deliberations that would be just, true, honourable,

4 They have said, [t] Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

[t] Esther iii. 6, 9.

they have followed the reverse. On the word rendered *counsel*—סוֹד, *sodh*—which means a *couch* or *cushion*, and hence a *divan*—see Notes on Job xv. 8; Ps. xxv. 14; lxiv. 2. The idea here is, that the persons referred to in the subsequent part of the psalm (vers. 6–8) had been assembled in a *divan*, or for consultation, and that they had there formed a malignant plan,—against God and his people,—which they were now proceeding to execute. ¶ *Against thy people.* For the purpose of destroying them. ¶ *And consulted against thy hidden ones.* The word rendered *hidden ones*—from the verb צָפַן, *tzaphan*, to hide, to conceal—properly denotes that which is secret, private, inaccessible (Ezek. vii. 22); and then, anything *protected* or hidden so as to be secure. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxvii. 5. It would seem here to refer to those who were so *protected* by Jehovah—so inaccessible to others by reason of his guardian care—that they would be safe.

4. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off*, etc. Let us utterly destroy them, and root them out from among the nations. Let us combine against them, and overpower them; let us divide their land among ourselves, attaching it to our own. The nations referred to (vers. 6–8) were those which surrounded the land of Israel; and the proposal seems to have been to partition the land of the Hebrews among themselves, as has been done in modern times in regard to Poland. On what principles, and in what proportions, they proposed thus to divide the land is not intimated, nor is it said that the project had gone so far that they had agreed on the terms of such a division. The formation of such a purpose, however, was in itself by no means improbable. The Hebrew people were offensive to all the surrounding nations by their religion, their prosperity, and the constant rebuke of tyranny and idolatry by their religious and their social institutions. There had been enough, also, in their past history—in the remembrance of the successful wars of the Hebrews with those very nations—to keep up a constant irritation on their part. We are not to be surprised, therefore, that there was a deeply-cherished desire to blot out the name and the nation altogether. ¶ *That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* That the nation as such may be utterly extinct and forgotten; that the former triumphs of that nation over us may be avenged; that we may no longer have in our very midst this painful memorial of the existence of one God, and of the demands of his law; that we may pursue our own plans without the silent or the open admonition derived from a religion so pure and holy. For the same reason the world has often endeavoured to destroy the church; to cause it to be extinct; to blot out its name; to make the very names *Christ* and *Christian* forgotten among men. Hence the fiery persecutions under the Roman government in the time of the Emperors; and hence, in every age, and in every land, the church has been exposed to persecution—originated with a purpose to destroy it as long as there was any hope of accomplishing that end. That purpose has been abandoned by Satan and his friends only because the result has shown that the persecution of the church served but to spread its principles and doctrines, and to fix it more firmly in the affections and confidence of mankind, so that the tendency of persecution is rather to overthrow the persecutor than the persecuted. Whether it can be destroyed by prosperity and corruption,—by science,—by error,—seems now to be the great problem before the mind of Satan.

5 For they have consulted
" together with one [1] consent:
they are confederate against
thee.

6 The [v] tabernacles of Edom,

u Ps. ii. 2. [1] *heart.*

and the Ishmaelites; of Moab,
and the Hagarenes;

7 Gebal, and Ammon, and
Amalek: the Philistines, with
the inhabitants of Tyre;

v 2 Chron. xx. 10.

5. *For they have consulted together with one consent.* Marg., as in Heb., *heart.* There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one *desire*—one *purpose*—in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ (Luke xxiii. 12); and the world, divided and hostile on other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion. ¶ *They are confederate against thee.* Literally, "They cut a covenant against thee;" that is, they *ratify* such a covenant, compact, league,—referring to the manner in which bargains and agreements were ratified by *cutting in pieces* a victim sacrificed on such occasions; that is, by giving to such a transaction the solemnity of a religious sanction. Gen. xv. 10; Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19. See Bochart, Hieroz. i. 35. The meaning here is, that they had entered into this agreement in the most solemn manner, under the sanctions of religion.

6. *The tabernacles of Edom.* The *tents* of Edom; meaning here, the dwellers in those tents, that is, the Edomites. The word *tabernacles* or *tents* does not necessarily imply that the nation then led a wandering life, for the word came to signify in process of time a dwelling-place, or a habitation. The Edomites were not, in fact, a roving and wandering people, but a people of fixed boundaries. In early periods, however, like most ancient people, they doubtless dwelt in tents. Edom, or Idumea, was south of Palestine. See Notes on Isa. xi. 14. ¶ *And the Ishmaelites.* The descendants of Ishmael. They dwelt in Arabia Deserta. ¶ *Of Moab.* On the situation of Moab, see Notes on Isa. xv. It was on the south-east of Palestine. ¶ *And the Hagarenes.* The Hagarenes were properly Arabs, so called from Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham, the mother of Ishmael. Gen. xvi. 1; xxv. 12. As connected with the Ishmaelites they would naturally join in this alliance.

7. *Gebal.* The Gebal here referred to was probably the same as Gebalene, the mountainous tract inhabited by the Edomites, extending from the Dead Sea southwards towards Petra, and still called by the Arabs *Djebal.* (Gesenius, *Lex.*) The word means *mountain.* Those who are here referred to were a part of the people of Edom. ¶ *And Ammon.* The word Ammon means *son of my people.* Ammon was the son of Lot by his youngest daughter, Gen. xix. 38. The Ammonites, descended from him, dwelt beyond the Jordan in the tract of country between the streams of Jabbok and Arnon. These also would be naturally associated in such a confederacy. 1 Sam. xi. 1–11. ¶ *And Amalek.* The Amalekites were a very ancient people. In the traditions of the Arabians they are reckoned among the aboriginal inhabitants of that country. They inhabited the regions on the south of Palestine, between Idumea and Egypt. Comp. Ex. xvii. 8–16; Num. xiii. 29; 1 Sam. xv. 7. They also extended eastward of the Dead Sea and Mount Seir (Num. xxiv. 20; Judges iii. 13; vi. 3, 33); and they appear also to have settled down in Palestine itself, whence the name the *Mount of the Amalekites,* in the territory of Ephraim, Judges xii. 15. ¶ *The Philistines.* Often mentioned in the Scriptures. They were the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, whence the *name* Philistia or Palestine. The word is supposed to mean the land of sojourners or stran-

8 Assur also is joined with them: they have[1] holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

[1] *been an arm to.*

9 Do unto them as *unto* the [w] Midianites; as *to* Sisera, [x] as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison;

[w] Num. xxxi. 1—12. [x] Judges iv. 15—24.

gers; hence in the Septuagint they are uniformly called ἀλλόφυλοι, those of *another tribe, strangers*, and their country is called γῆ ἀλλοφύλων. They were constant enemies of the Hebrews, and it was natural that *they* should be engaged in such an alliance as this. ¶ *With the inhabitants of Tyre.* On the situation of Tyre, see the Introd. to Isa. xxiii. Why *Tyre* should unite in this confederacy is not known. The purpose seems to have been to combine as many nations as possible against the Hebrew people, and—as far as it could be done—*all* those that were adjacent to it, so that it might be *surrounded* by enemies, and so that its destruction might be certain. It would not probably be difficult to find some pretext for inducing *any* of the kings of the surrounding nations to unite in such an unholy alliance. Kings, in general, have not been unwilling to form alliances against liberty.

8. *Assur also is joined with them.* Assyria. Assyria was on the northeast of Palestine. The conspirators had secured, it seems, the aid of this powerful kingdom, and they felt confident of success. ¶ *They have holpen the children of Lot.* The sons, or the descendants of Lot. The margin is, as the Hebrew, *been an arm to.* That is, they were an aid, or help; in other words, the sons of Lot were permitted, as it were, to make use of the *arm* of these powerful nations in accomplishing their purposes. The sons of Lot were Moab and Ammon, the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites, Gen. xix. 37, 38. It would appear from this, that the purpose of destroying the Hebrew people had been originated by the Moabites and Ammonites, and that they had called in the aid of the surrounding nations to enable them to carry out their plan. The enumeration of those who had joined in the alliance shows that *all* the nations adjacent to Palestine, on every side, had entered into the agreement, so that the land was completely encompassed, or hemmed in, by enemies. In these circumstances, the conspirators felt secure; in these circumstances, the Hebrew people had no resource but to call upon God. Thus it often occurs that the people of God are so *surrounded* by enemies, or are so *hemmed in* by troubles and trials, that they have no other resource than this:—they are shut up to the necessity of prayer. Often God so orders, or permits things to occur, as to cut off his people from every other dependence, and to make them feel that there *is* no help for them but in Him.

9. *Do unto them as* unto *the Midianites.* That is, Let them be overthrown and destroyed as the Midianites were. The reference here is to the complete overthrow of the Midianites, as related in Numbers xxxi. ¶ *As to Sisera.* The captain or commander of the army of Jabin, king of Canaan. He was conquered by the Hebrew armies under the direction of the prophetess Deborah, by the instrumentality of Barak (Judges iv. 4, 6, 14, 15), and was slain by Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, Judges iv. 17–21. ¶ *As to Jabin.* The king of Canaan, in whose service Sisera was. ¶ *At the brook of Kison.* Judges iv. 13. This is a stream which rises near Mount Tabor, and empties itself into the Bay of Ptolemais. In Judges v. 21, in the song of Deborah on occasion of this victory, it is mentioned as "that ancient river, the river Kishon;" that is, it was a stream which was well known; which had been referred to in ancient tales and poetry;—not a newly discovered river, but a river

10 *Which* perished at En-dor: they became *as* dung for the earth.

11 Make their nobles like Oreb [y] and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah, [z] and as Zalmunna:

y Judges vii. 25. z Judges viii. 12—21.

12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as [a] the stubble before the wind.

14 As the fire burneth a wood,

a Isa. xvii. 13, 14; Matt. iii. 12.

whose name and locality were familiar to all.

10. Which *perished at En-dor.* En-dor is not particularly mentioned in the history of the transaction in the book of Judges, but it is known that Endor was in the vicinity of Mount Tabor, and there is no improbability in the tradition which has fixed the site of the battle at or near Endor. The word or name *En-dor* means properly *fount of the dwelling* (or, *habitation*), and was probably given at first to a spring or fountain near to which some distinguished or well-known person dwelt. It is mentioned in Josh. xvii. 11; 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. ¶ *They became* as *dung for the earth.* The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones, as the field of Waterloo was by that of the slain, or as fields of battle commonly are.

11. *Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb.* These were princes or rulers of the Midianites, slain by Gideon, the one on the rock Oreb, and the other at the wine-press of Zeeb. Judges vii. 25. The prayer here is, that the enemies who had conspired against the land of Israel might be utterly destroyed. ¶ *Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.* The word here rendered *princes* means properly *anointed,* and was given to princes, kings, prophets, and priests, as anointed, or as set apart by anointing to their office. Zebah and Zalmunna were kings of Midian, slain also by Gideon. See Judges viii. 5, 21.

12. *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.* The *houses* of God here mean the habitations of God, or the places where he dwelt among the people. As there was but one ark, one tabernacle, and one temple, or one place of constituted public worship, this must refer to other places where God was worshipped, or where he might be supposed to reside;—either to synagogues (see Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 8), or to the private dwellings of the people regarded as a holy people, or as a people among whom God dwelt. This may, therefore, imply that their dwellings — their private abodes— were also dwelling-places of God, as now the house of a religious family— a place where God is regularly worshipped—may be regarded as an abode of God on the earth. The language here is not to be understood as that of Oreb and Zeeb, of Zebah and Zalmunna, but of the enemies referred to in the psalm, who had entered into the conspiracy to destroy the Hebrew nation. *They* had said, "Let us *inherit* the houses of God;" that is, Let us take to ourselves, and for our possession, the dwellings of the land where God is supposed to reside.

13. *O my God, make them like a wheel,* etc. Or rather, like *a rolling thing*—something that the wind rolls along. The word גַּלְגַּל — *galgal* — means properly a wheel, as of a chariot, Ezek. x. 2, 6; or a wheel for drawing water from a well, Eccl. xii. 6; then, a whirlwind, Ps. lxxvii. 19; and then, anything driven before a whirlwind, as chaff, or stubble, Isa. xvii. 13. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxii. 18. The prayer here is, that they might be utterly destroyed, or driven away.

14. *As the fire burneth a wood,* etc. The same idea is here presented under another form. No image of desola-

and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

16 Fill their faces with shame;

that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

tion is more fearful than that of fire raging in a forest; or of fire on the mountains. As trees and shrubs and grass fall before such a flame, so the prayer is, that they who had combined against the people of God might be swept away by his just displeasure.

15. *So persecute them.* So pursue them; so follow them up. The word *persecute* is now used in a somewhat different sense, as denoting pain or suffering inflicted on account of religious opinion. It means here simply *to pursue.* ¶ *With thy tempest.* With the expressions of thy displeasure; with punishment which may be compared with the fury of a storm. ¶ *And make them afraid with thy storm.* Or, Make them afraid, terrify them, so that they will flee away. As all that is here sought by prayer is what men endeavour to *do* when an enemy invades their country,—as they *make arrangements* for repelling those enemies, and overthrowing them, and as they feel that it is *right* to do so,—there is no impropriety in making this the subject of prayer to God. What it is right for men to *attempt,* it is right to pray for; what it would be right for them to *do* if they had the power, it is right to ask God to accomplish; what is free from malignity in the act, and in the design, may be free from malignity in the desire and the prayer; and if men can carry with them the idea that what they are endeavouring *to do* is right, whether as magistrates, judges, rulers, defenders of their country, or as private men, they will have very little difficulty in regard to the so-called *imprecatory psalms.* See this subject treated in the General Introd.

16. *Fill their faces with shame.* As those who are disappointed and foiled in their plans,—such disappointment and confusion commonly manifesting itself in the face. The prayer here is, that their enemies might be so baffled in their designs,—that they might be made so to feel how vain and hopeless were all their plans,—that there might be such a manifest interposition of God in the case, as that they should be led to see that Jehovah reigned; that it was in vain to contend with him, and that his people were under his protection. ¶ *That they may seek thy name, O* LORD. That they may be led to seek *thee.* This explains the drift and design of the whole prayer in the psalm. It is not a malignant prayer for the destruction of their enemies; it is not a wish that they might be made to suffer; but it is a prayer that the Divine dealing might be such as to lead them to the acknowledgment of the true God. It is a benevolent thing to desire that men may be brought to the knowledge of the true God, though it be through the discomfiture of their own plans, by defeat, or by suffering. Anything that leads men to an acquaintance with God, and results in securing his friendship and favour, is a gain, and will be cause of thankfulness in the end.

17. *Let them be confounded.* Let them be ashamed. That is, Let them have that kind of shame and confusion which results from the fact that their plans have not been successful, or that they have been foiled and baffled in their schemes. ¶ *And troubled.* Disturbed; put to confusion. Let them be troubled as men are who are unsuccessful in their projects. ¶ *For ever.* As a people; as confederated nations; as united in such an unholy alliance. Let them *never* again be able thus to combine,

18 That *men* may know that thou whose name [b] alone *is* JEHOVAH, *art* the Most High over all the earth.

[b] Isa. xlii. 8.

or to form a compact for the destruction of thy people. This does not refer to them as *individuals*, but as *nations*. It is a prayer that they may be so discomfited now that they may see the wickedness and folly of all such efforts, and that they may *never* again form such a combination. ¶ *Yea, let them be put to shame.* By utter failure in their schemes. ¶ *And perish.* Not individually, but as combined—as an alliance. Let there be a complete *end* to such a confederacy, so that it shall never be seen again.

18. *That* men *may know.* That all men may be impressed with the belief that thou art the true and only God. This was the design and aim of the prayer in the psalm. It was that there might be such a manifestation of the power of God; that it might be so evident that the events which had occurred could be traced to no other source than God himself, that all men might be led to honour him. ¶ *That thou whose name alone* is *JEHOVAH.* To whom alone this name belongs; to whom alone it can be properly ascribed. This was the *peculiar* name by which God chose to be known. Ex. vi. 3. Comp. Notes on Isa. xlii. 8. On the word *Jehovah*—יְהוָה—see Notes on Ps. lxviii. 4. It is found in combination, in Gen. xxii. 14; Ex. xvii. 15; Judges vi. 24; Ezek. xlviii. 35; Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 16. ¶ Art *the Most High over all the earth.* Thou art the Supreme God, ruling over all people. Thy dominion is so absolute over nations, even when combined together, and thy power is so complete in foiling their plans, and disconcerting their purposes, that it is clear that thou dost reign over them. He that could break up *such* a combination—he that could rescue his people from *such* an allied force—*must* have all power over the nations—*must* be the true God.

PSALM LXXXIV.

On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "*upon Gittith,*" see Notes on the title to Psalm viii. On the meaning of the phrase "*for* (marg. *to*) *the sons of Korah,*" see Notes on the title to Psalm xlii. The *author* of the psalm is unknown, though it bears a strong resemblance to the forty-second, and *may* have been composed by David himself. If so, it was dedicated, or devoted, as that was, to "the sons of Korah," to be adapted by them to music, and to be employed in public worship, and it *may* also have been composed on the same occasion. It is to be observed, however, that there were not only numerous occasions in the life of David, but also in the lives of other pious Hebrews, to which the sentiments in this psalm would be appropriate; and we cannot, therefore, affirm with certainty that it was composed by David. If it had been, moreover, it is difficult to account for the fact that his *name* is not prefixed to it. See, however, Notes on ver. 9.

The *occasion* on which the psalm was composed is apparent from the psalm itself. It was evidently when the writer was deprived, for some cause now unknown, of the privileges of the sanctuary. That cause may have been exile, or sickness, or distance, or imprisonment;—but whatever it was, the psalmist expresses his own deep feelings on the subject; the sense which he has of the blessedness of an attendance on the sanctuary, and of the happiness of those who were permitted to attend—regarding it as such a privilege that even the sparrow and the swallow might be supposed to be happy in being permitted to dwell near the altar of God. He describes, also, the joy and rejoicing of those who went up in companies, or in solemn procession, to the place of public worship—a happy, triumphant group on their way to the house of God.

It is not possible, however, to ascertain the *exact* time, or the *particular* occasion, when the psalm was written. The *language* is such as might have been used when the public worship was conducted either in the tabernacle, or in the temple—for the words employed are such as were adapted to either. It

PSALM LXXXIV.

To the chief Musician upon *c* Gittith.
A Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah.

HOW amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

must have been, however, before the temple was destroyed, for it is clear that the usual place of public worship was still standing, and consequently it was before the captivity. The psalm is not one indicating *public* calamity; it is one of *private* love and sorrow.

The *contents* of the psalm are as follows:—

I. The psalmist expresses his own sense of the loveliness of the place where God is worshipped, and his earnest longing for the courts of the Lord, vers. 1, 2.

II. He illustrates this feeling by a beautiful image drawn from the sparrow and the swallow,—building their nests unobstructed and unalarmed near the very altar of God—as if they *must* be happy to be so near to God, and to dwell peaceably there, vers. 3, 4.

III. He describes the happiness of those who are *on the way* to the place of public worship: their joy; their progress in strength of purpose as they approached the place; their happiness in appearing before God, vers. 5-7.

IV. He pours forth his earnest prayer that *he* might be permitted thus to approach God; that he might be allowed to abide in the courts of God; that he might find a home there; that he might even spend a day there,—for a day there was better than a thousand elsewhere, vers. 8-12.

The whole psalm is a beautiful expression of love to the sanctuary, as felt by all who truly worship God.

1. *How amiable.* How much to be loved; how lovely. The word *amiable* is now used to denote a quality of mind or disposition—as gentle, affectionate, kind. The word here used, however in the original, means rather *dear, beloved*—as a token of endearment. Comp. Notes on the title to Ps. xlv. The idea here is, that the place of public worship is dear to the heart, as a beloved friend—a child—a wife—is. There is a strong and tender love for it. ¶ Are *thy tabernacles.* Thy dwelling-places. This word might be applied either to the tabernacle or the temple, or to any

2 My [d] soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

c Ps. viii., *title.* [1] Or, *of.* *d* Ps. xxvii. 4.

place where God was supposed to reside, or where his worship was celebrated. The *plural* form is here used probably because the tabernacle and the temple were divided into two parts or rooms, and each might be regarded as in a proper sense the dwelling-place of God. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 12, *et seq.* ¶ *O* LORD *of hosts!* Jehovah of hosts; Jehovah, controlling—ruling—guiding—marshalling—all the armies of heaven and earth:—comp. Notes on Isa. i. 9; Ps. xxiv. 10.

2. *My soul longeth.* The word here used means properly to be pale; then, to be faint or weak; and then, to pine after, to long for, to desire earnestly. It would properly denote such a longing or desire as to *make* one faint or exhausted; that is, it indicates intense desire. In Ps. xvii. 12, it is applied to a hungry lion; "Like a lion that is *greedy* of its prey." In Gen. xxxi. 30, it conveys the idea of intense desire: "Because thou *sore longedst* after thy father's house." For an illustration of the sentiment here expressed, see Notes on Ps. xlii. 1, 2. ¶ *Yea, even fainteth.* Is exhausted; fails of its strength. The word means properly to be completed, finished; then to be consumed, to be spent, to waste or pine away. Gen. xxi. 15; Jer. xvi. 4; Lam. ii. 11; Job xix. 27. ¶ *For the courts of the* LORD. The word here used refers to the different *areas* around the tabernacle or temple, within which many of the services of public worship were conducted, and which were frequented by different classes of persons. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 12. ¶ *My heart and my flesh.* My whole nature; my body and my soul;—all my desires and aspirations—all the longings of my heart are there. The body—the flesh—cries out for *rest;*—the heart—the soul—for *communion with God.* Our whole

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

nature demands the benefits which spring from the worship of God. Body and soul were made for his service, and the necessities of neither can be *satisfied* without religion. ¶ *Crieth out.* The word here used—רָנַן, *ranan*—means properly to give forth a tremulous sound; then, to give forth the voice in vibrations, or in a tremulous manner; and thence it may mean either to utter cries of joy, (Lev. ix. 24; Job xxxviii. 7; Isa. xii. 6), or to utter a loud wail (Lam. ii. 19). Its common application is to joy (Ps. xcviii. 4; cxxxii. 16; lxv. 8); and it might be rendered here, "*Sing* unto the Lord," or "*Rejoice* unto the Lord." The connexion, however, seems to demand that it be understood as the cry of earnest longing or desire. ¶ *For the living God.* God, the true God, considered as *living*, in contradistinction from idols, always spoken of as dead. Comp. Ps. lxiii. 1.

3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.* A home; a place where she may abide, and build her nest, and rear her young. The word here used—צִפּוֹר, *tzippor*—is a name given to a bird from its chirping or twittering. It is rendered *sparrow* in Lev. xiv. 4 (marg.); Ps. cii. 7; and is often rendered *bird* (Gen. vii. 14; xv. 10, *et al.*), and *fowl*, Deut. iv. 17; Neh. v. 18; *et al.* It may denote a bird of any kind, but is properly applied here to a sparrow, a species of bird very common and abundant in Palestine; a bird that finds its home especially about houses, barns, etc. That sparrows would be *likely* to gather around the tabernacle and even the altar, will appear not improbable from their well-known habits. "The sparrows which flutter and twitter about dilapidated buildings at Jerusalem, and crevices of the city walls, are very numerous. In some of the more lonely streets they are so noisy as almost to overpower every other sound. Their chirping is almost an articulate utterance of the Hebrew term (*tsippor*), which was employed to designate that class of birds. It may be taken for granted that the sparrows are not less numerous in other places where they have similar means for obtaining shelter and building their nests. The sparrows, in their resort to houses and other such places, appear to be a privileged bird. Encouraged by such indulgence, they are not timid—they frequent boldly the haunts of men. The sight of this familiarity reminded me again and again of the passage in the Psalms (lxxxiv. 3), where the pious Israelite, debarred from the privileges of the sanctuary, felt as if he could envy the lot of the birds, so much more favoured than himself."—Professor Hackett, "Illustrations of Scripture," pp. 94, 95. ¶ *And the swallow a nest for herself.* A place where it may make its nest. The word here used—דְּרוֹר, *derōr*—denotes properly, *swift flight, a wheeling* or *gyration;* and it is applied to birds which fly in circles or gyrations, and the name is thus appropriately given to the swallow. It occurs in this sense only here and in Prov. xxvi. 2. ¶ *Where she may lay her young.* Where she may *place* her young. The word *lay* here is not used in the sense in which we now apply it when we speak of "laying" eggs. It means to *place* them; to make a home for them; to dispose and arrange them. ¶ Even *thine altars,* etc. The altars where thou art worshipped. The idea here is, that the sparrows and the swallows seemed to have a happy lot; to be in a condition to be *envied.* Even they might come freely to the place where God was worshipped—to the very altars,—and make their home there undisturbed. How strongly in contrast with this was the condition of the wandering—the exiled—author of the psalm!

4 Blessed [e] *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

[e] Ps. lxv. 4.

5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee: in whose heart *are* the ways *of them*:

6 *Who* passing through the

4. *Blessed* are *they that dwell in thy house.* Who are constantly there; whose permanent abode is there. The reference is to the priests and Levites—the ministers of religion—who had their permanent abode near the tabernacle and the temple, and who were wholly devoted to the sacred duties of religion. Their lot is here spoken of as a *blessed*, or as a happy lot, in contradistinction from those who had only the opportunity of occasionally going up to worship. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxv. 4. ¶ *They will be still praising thee.* They will do it constantly, as their daily employment. It will not be worship begun and ended, but worship continued—the regular business from day to day. Such will heaven be; and this will constitute its glory. There will be (*a*) a permanent residence there:—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out," (Rev. iii. 12;) and (*b*) there will be the constant service of God; such a service that it may be described as perpetual praise. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "They will praise thee *for ages of ages;*" that is, for ever.

5. *Blessed* is *the man whose strength* is *in thee.* Not merely are they blessed who dwell there permanently, but the man also whose heart is there; who feels that his strength is in God alone; who loves to go there when opportunity is afforded him, treading his way to Zion. The *idea* is, that all strength must come from God; that this strength is to be obtained by waiting on him (comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 31), and that, therefore, it is a privilege thus to wait on God. Comp. ver. 7. ¶ *In whose heart* are *the ways* of them. Literally, "The ways in their heart." De Wette renders this, "Who thinketh on the ways [or paths] to Jerusalem." The word "ways" may refer either to the ways or paths that lead to the place of worship, or the ways to God and to heaven. As the allusion, however, is evidently to those who were accustomed to go up to the place of public worship, the meaning is, that the man is blessed or happy whose heart is on those ways; who thinks on them; who makes preparation for going up; who purposes thus to go up to worship. The sense is enfeebled in our translation by the insertion of the words "*of them.*" The literal translation is better: "The ways [that is, the paths—the going up—the journey—to the place of public worship]—are in their heart." Their affections; their thoughts are there. The word rendered *ways*, means commonly *a raised way, a highway*, but it may refer to any public path. It would be applicable to what we call a *turnpike* (road), as a way *thrown up* for public use. The allusion is to the ways or paths by which the people commonly went up to the place of public worship; and the idea may be well expressed in the language of Watts,—

"I love her gates, I love the road."

The sentiment thus expressed finds a response in thousands of hearts:—in the happiness—the peace—the joy—with which true worshippers go to the house of God. In the mind of the writer of the psalm this would have an additional beauty and attractiveness as being associated with the thought of the multitudes thronging that path—the groups—the companies—the families—that crowded the way to the place of public worship on their great festal occasions.

6. Who *passing through the valley of Baca.* This is one of the most difficult verses in the Book of Psalms, and has been, of course, very variously interpreted. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, Luther, and Professor Alexander, render it *a valley of tears.*

valley of [1] Baca, make it a well: the rain also [2] filleth the pools.

[1] Or, *mulberry trees make him a well*, 2 Sam. v. 23.

[2] *covereth.*

The word *Baca* (בָּכָא) means properly weeping, lamentation; and then it is given to a certain tree—not probably a mulberry tree, but some species of balsam,—from its *weeping;* that is, because it seemed to distil *tears*, or drops of balsam resembling tears in size and appearance. It is translated *mulberry trees* in 2 Sam. v. 23, 24; 1 Chron. xiv. 14, 15; and so in the margin here, "mulberry trees make him a well." There is no reason, however, to think that it has that meaning here. The true rendering is, "valley of lamentation," or weeping; and it may have reference to some lonely valley in Palestine,—where there was no water—a gloomy way—through which those commonly passed who went up to the place of worship. It would be vain, however, to attempt now to determine the locality of the valley referred to, as the name, if ever given to it, seems long since to have passed away. It may, however, be used as emblematic of human life—"a vale of tears;" and the passage may be employed as an *illustration* of the effect of religion in diffusing happiness and comfort where there was trouble and sorrow, —*as if* fountains should be made to flow in a sterile and desolate valley. ¶ *Make it a well.* Or, a fountain. That is, It becomes to the pilgrims as a sacred fountain. They "*make*" such a gloomy valley *like* a fountain, or like a road where fountains—full, free, refreshing—break forth everywhere to invigorate the traveller. Religious worship—the going up to the house of God—turns that in the journey of life which would otherwise be gloomy and sad into joy; makes a world of tears a world of comfort; has an effect *like* that of changing a gloomy path into one of pleasantness and beauty. The *idea* here is the same which occurs in Isa. xxxv. 7, "And the parched ground shall become a pool" (see Notes on that passage);—and in Job xxxv. 10, "Who giveth songs in the night" (see Notes on that passage);—an idea which was so beautifully illustrated in the case of Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi, when, at midnight they "sang praises to God" (Acts xvi. 25), and which is so often illustrated in the midst of affliction and trouble. By the power of religion, by the presence of the Saviour, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, such times become seasons of purest joy—times remembered ever afterwards with most fervent gratitude, as among the happiest periods of life. For religion can diffuse smiles over faces darkened by care; can light up the eye sunk in despondency; can change tears of sorrow into tears of joy; can impart peace in scenes of deepest sorrow; and make the most gloomy vales of life like green pastures illuminated by the brightness of noonday. ¶ *The rain also filleth the pools.* Marg., *covereth.* This is a still more difficult expression than the former. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "The teacher—the lawgiver — ὁ νομοθετῶν — *legislator* — gives blessings." Luther, "The teachers shall be adorned with many blessings." Gesenius, "Yea, with blessings the autumnal rain doth cover it." De Wette, "And with blessing the harvest-rain covers it," which he explains as meaning, "Where they come, though it would be sorrow and tears, yet they are attended with prosperity and blessing." Professor Alexander, "Also with blessings is the teacher clothed." The word rendered *rain* — מוֹרֶה, *moreh*—is from יָרָה, *yarah*, to throw, to cast, to place, to sprinkle, and may denote (1) an archer; (2) the early rain; (3) teaching, Isa. ix. 15; 2 Kings xvii. 28; or a teacher, Isa. xxx. 20; Job xxxvi. 22. It is rendered *rain*, in the place before us; and *former rain* twice in Joel ii. 23 (marg., *a teacher*). The

7 They [f] go from [1] strength to strength; *every one of them* in Zion appeareth [g] before God.

[f] Job xvii. 9; Prov. iv. 18.
[1] Or, *company to company.*
[g] Jude 24.

word rendered *filleth* means properly to cover, and would be fitly so translated here. Comp. Lev. xiii. 45; Ezek. xxiv. 17, 22. The word has not naturally the idea of *filling*. The word rendered *pools*—בְּרָכוֹת, *berachoth*—if pointed in one manner—בְּרֵכָה, *beraichah* (in the singular)—denotes a *pond, pool,* or basin of water; if pointed in another manner—בְּרָכָה, *berâchah*—it means *blessing, benediction,* and is often so used in the Scriptures, Gen. xxvii. 12; xxviii. 4; xxxiii. 11; Prov. xi. 11, etc. The rendering of Gesenius, as above, "Yea, with blessings the autumnal rain doth cover it," (that is, the valley so desolate in the heat of summer—the valley of weeping), would perhaps be the most natural, though it is not easy to see the *connexion* according to this interpretation, or according to any other proposed. Least of all is it easy to see the connexion according to the translation of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, Luther, and Prof. Alexander. *Perhaps* the connexion in the mind of the author of the psalm may have been this. He sees the sterile and desolate valley through which the pilgrims are passing made joyous by the cheerfulness — the happiness — the songs—of those who are on their way to the house of God. This fact—this image—*suggests* to him the idea that this is *similar* to the effect which is produced in that valley when copious rains descend upon it, and when, though commonly desolate, it is covered with grass and flowers, or is "*blessed*" by the rain. This latter image is to his mind an *illustration* of the happy scene now before him in the cheerful and exulting movements of the pilgrims on their way to the house of God. The one suggests the other; and the psalmist has a *combined* image before his mind, the one illustrating the other, and *both* showing how a vale naturally desolate and sterile *may* be made cheerful and joyous.

7. *They go from strength to strength,* etc. Marg., *company to company.* The Septuagint and Vulgate, "They go from strength to strength; the God of gods is seen in Zion." Luther, "They obtain one victory after another, that one must see that there is a righteous God in Zion." De Wette, "Going they increase in strength, until they appear before God in Zion." This last is doubtless the true idea. As they pass along, as they come nearer and nearer to the end of their journey, their strength, their ardour, their firmness of purpose increases. By their conversation; by their songs; by encouraging one another; by seeing one difficulty overcome after another; by the fact kept before their minds, and increasingly apparent, that they are constantly approaching the end of their journey,—that the distance to be travelled is constantly diminishing,—that the difficulties become less and less, and that they will soon see the towers and walls of the desired city,—they are invigorated, cheered, comforted. What a beautiful illustration of the life of Christian pilgrims—of the bands of the redeemed—as they journey on towards the end of their course,—the Mount Zion above! By prayer and praise and mutual counsel, by their songs, by the fact that difficulties are surmounted, leaving fewer to be overcome, and that the journey to be travelled is diminishing constantly,—by the feeling that they are ever drawing nearer to the Zion of their home, until the light is seen to glitter and play on its towers and walls,—they increase in strength, they become more confirmed in their purposes, they bear trials better, they overcome difficulties more easily,

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look [h] upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts *is*

[h] Ps. cxix. 132.

they walk more firmly, they tread their way more cheerfully and triumphantly. ¶ Every one of them *in Zion appeareth before God.* Literally, "He shall appear to God in Zion." The meaning evidently is, that they who are referred to in the previous verses as going up to Zion will be seen there, or will come before God, in the place of worship. There is a change of number here, from the plural to the singular,—as, in verse 5, there is a change from the singular to the plural. Such changes are frequent in the Scriptures as in other writings, and the one here can be accounted for on the supposition that the author of the psalm, in looking upon the moving procession, at one moment may be supposed to have looked upon them as a procession,—a moving mass,—and then that he looked upon them as individuals, and spake of them as such. The idea here is, that they would not falter and fall by the way; that the cheerful, joyous procession would come to the desired place; that their wishes would be gratified, and that their joy would be full when they came to the end of their journey—to Zion. So it is of all Christian pilgrims. Every true believer—every one that truly loves God—will appear before him in the upper Zion—in heaven. There their joy will be complete; there the long-cherished desires of their hearts will be fully gratified; there all that they ever hoped for, and more, will be realized.

8. O LORD *God of hosts.* See Notes on ver. 1. God is appealed to here as a God of power; as a God who is able to accomplish all his purposes, and to impart every needed blessing. ¶ *Hear my prayer.* A prayer of the psalmist that *he* might also have a place among the servants of God in their worship, ver. 2. To this earnestness of prayer he is excited by the view which he had of the blessedness of those who went with songs up to Zion. His soul longs to be among them; from the sight of them his prayer is the more fervent that he may partake of their blessedness and joy. ¶ *Give ear, O God of Jacob.* With whom Jacob wrestled in prayer, and prevailed. Gen. xxxii. 24–30. On the phrase, *give ear,* see Notes on Ps. v. 1.

9. *Behold, O God our shield.* Our defence, as a shield is a defence in the day of battle. Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 12; xviii. 2; xxxiii. 20. It is an appeal to God *as* a protector. The psalmist was an exile—a wanderer—and he looked to God as his defence. ¶ *And look upon the face of thine anointed.* Look favourably upon; look with benignity and kindness. The word *anointed* here is the word *Messiah* — מָשִׁיחַ (Greek, χριστός, *Christ*; see Notes on Matt. i. 1). Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 2. It here refers, however, evidently to the author of the psalm; and the word used is evidence that the author was David, as the anointed of the Lord, or some one set apart to the kingly office. It is true that this word was applicable to other kings, and also to priests and prophets, but the circumstances in the case concur best on the supposition that David is referred to. The allusion here is not to Christ; and the language does not suggest or justify the use which is often made of it when prayer is offered, that "God would look upon us in the face of his anointed"—whatever may, or may not be, the propriety of that prayer on other grounds.

10. *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.* Better—happier—more profitable—more to be desired—than a thousand days spent else-

better than a thousand. [1]I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

[1] *I would choose rather to sit at the threshold.*

where. That is, I should find more happiness—more true joy—in one day spent in the house of God, in his worship, in the exercises of true religion,—more that will be satisfactory to the soul, and that will be dwelt on with pleasure in the memory when life is coming to a close—than I could in a thousand days spent in any other manner. This was much for a man like David—or a man who had been encompassed with all the splendour of royalty—to say; it is much for any man to say. And yet it could be said with truth by him; it can be said with equal truth by others; and when we come to the end of life—to the time when we shall review the past, and ask where we have found *most* true happiness, most that was satisfactory to the soul, most that we shall delight then to dwell on and to remember, most that we should be glad to have repeated and perpetuated, most that would be free from the remembrance of disappointment, chagrin, and care,—it will not be the banqueting hall—the scenes of gaiety—the honours, the praises, the flatteries of men—or even the delights of literature and of the social circle,—but it will be the happy times which we shall have spent in communion with God,—the times when in the closet we poured out our hearts to Him,—when we bowed before him at the family altar, when we approached him in the sanctuary. The sweetest remembrances of life will be the sabbath and the exercises of religion. ¶ *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God.* Marg., *I would choose rather to sit at the threshold.* The verb here used is derived from a noun signifying *sill* or *threshold*, and it would seem to mean here to stand on the threshold; to be at the door or the entrance, even without the privilege of entering the house: I would prefer that humble place to a residence *within* the abodes of the wicked. The verb here used occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The exact idea is not, as would seem from our translation, to *keep* the door, as in the capacity of a sexton or servant, but that of occupying the *sill*—the threshold,—the privilege of standing there, and looking in, even if he was not permitted to enter. It would be an honour and a privilege to be anywhere about the place of public worship, rather than to be the occupant of a dwelling-place of sin. ¶ *Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* The word *tents* here is equivalent to *dwellings.* It is used because it was so common in early periods to dwell in tents; and hence the word was employed to denote a dwelling in general. The emphasis here is very much on the word "*in*:"—he would prefer standing at the door of the house of worship to dwelling *within* the abodes of the wicked,—that is, to being admitted to intimacy with those who occupy such dwellings,—however splendid, rich, and gorgeous, those abodes might be.

11 For the LORD God *is* a sun [i] and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good [k] *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

[i] Isa. lx. 19. [k] Phil. iv. 19.

11. *For the* LORD *God* is *a sun.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "For the Lord loveth mercy and truth." Our translation, however, is the correct one. The sun gives light, warmth, beauty, to the creation; so God is the source of light, joy, happiness, to the soul. Comp. Isa. lx. 19; Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5. ¶ *And shield.* See ver. 9. ¶ *The* LORD *will give grace and glory.* Grace, or favour, here; glory, or honour, in the world to come. He

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

will bestow all needful favour on his people in this life; he will admit them to glory in the world to come. Grace and glory are connected. The bestowment of the one will be followed by the other. Rom. viii. 29, 30. He that partakes of the *grace* of God on earth will partake of *glory* in heaven. Grace comes before glory; glory always follows where grace is given. ¶ *No good* thing *will he withhold*, etc. Nothing really good; nothing that man really needs; nothing pertaining to this life, nothing necessary to prepare for the life to come. Comp. 1 Tim. iv. 8; Phil. iv. 19.

12. *O* LORD *of hosts, blessed* is *the man that trusteth in thee.* Blessed in every respect. His lot is a happy one; — happy in thy friendship; happy in being permitted to worship thee; happy in the blessings which religion scatters along his path here; happy in thy sustaining grace in times of trial; happy in the support given in the hour of death; happy in the eternity to which he is going. Oh that all men would try it, and experience in their own souls the happiness—the real, genuine, deep, permanent joy—*of trusting in God*;— of believing that there *is* a God; of confiding in his character; of leaning on him in every situation in life; of relying on his mercy, his grace, and his faithfulness, in the hour of death!

PSALM LXXXV.

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Psalm iv. On the expression, "for the sons of Korah," see Notes on the title to Psalm xlii. Neither of these expressions determines anything in regard to the authorship of the psalm, or the occasion on which it was composed, and conjecture on these points would be useless. There were in the Jewish history, as there have been in the Christian church, numerous occasions to which the sentiments of the psalm would be appropriate. It was evidently composed in view of the fact that God *had*, on some former occasion, interposed when his people were in trouble, but that now for similar causes he was again angry with them, and they were suffering similar calamities. The psalm contains a fervent prayer that God would again appear for them, and it implies a confident expectation that he would do this, so that the calamities which had come upon them would be removed—even as by a miraculous interposition. There is nothing to make it absolutely certain that it pertains to the Babylonish captivity, as De Wette supposes, but the language is so general that it might refer to *any* captivity.

The psalm consists essentially of three parts:—

I. An allusion to God's gracious interposition in former times, as the ground of the present appeal to him, vers. 1–3. In those times, when his people had been conquered, he *had* restored to them the possession of their own land; he *had* forgiven their iniquity; he *had* turned himself from the fierceness of his anger. These acts of mercy were now remembered; and this was the ground of confident hope in the present trouble.

II. A description of the state of the people at the time when the psalm was composed, as demanding help from God, vers. 4–7. It is clear that the nation was suffering from some calamity; that the anger of God seemed to be upon them; that it appeared as if his wrath would *never* be turned away; and that unless he should interpose the nation must perish.

III. The expression of a confident hope that God *would* deliver his people, vers. 8–13. (*a*) The psalmist represents himself as willing to hear what God would say, with the hope that he would speak peace to his people; (ver. 8); (*b*) he declares his belief that God is near to them who fear him (ver. 9), and that in the present case—in the manner in which he would meet the present emergency—there would be a mingling of mercy and truth—of righteousness and peace:—that *each* of these, in proper proportions, and without collision, would meet and mingle in the Divine dealings; that is, it would be seen, in his dealings with his people, that God was merciful *and* just,—righteous *and* disposed to peace (ver. 10); (*c*) he expresses his assurance that, dark as things now ap-

PSALM LXXXV.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah.

LORD, thou hast been [2] favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven [*l*] the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned [3] *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

[1] Or, *of*, Ps. xlii., *title*.
[2] Or, *well pleased with*, Ps. lxxvii. 7.
[*l*] Col. ii. 13.
[3] Or, *thine anger from waxing hot*, Deut. xiii. 17.

peared, there would be a Divine interposition *as if* truth (or, a just solution of these difficulties) should spring out of the very earth—*as if* it would come from some unknown quarter and in some unexpected manner, as mysterious, and as incomprehensible, and as far removed from human agency *as if* it came up suddenly from the ground,—or *as if* the heavens opened themselves, and it looked down from the sky (ver. 11); and (*d*) he, in conclusion, expresses his confident belief that the Lord would give that which was truly good; that the land would again yield its increase; that righteousness would attend his march through the land, going as it were before him, and causing all the people to walk in his steps, vers. 12, 13.

There does not appear to have been in this psalm any *original* reference to the Messiah, or to his work:—that is, all that there is in the psalm can be explained on the supposition that it has no such reference. But it must be obvious to every one that the *language* is such as is fitted most beautifully and appropriately to describe many things in the plan of redemption, and especially to express the fact that *in* that work the attributes of God, some of which seem not easy to be reconciled, have been most perfectly and beautifully manifested and blended.

1. LORD, *thou hast been favourable unto thy land.* Marg., *well pleased with.* The idea is that he had been kind or propitious to the nation; to wit, on some former occasion. So Luther, (*vormals*) "formerly." The reference is to some previous period in their history, when he had exercised his power in their behalf. ¶ *Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.* That is, at the time referred to. It is not necessary to suppose that the allusion is to the period immediately preceding the time when the psalm was composed, but it may have been any period in their history. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the people had been removed from their land at the time; for all that would be necessary to suppose in interpreting the language would be that the land had been invaded, even though the inhabitants still remained in it.

2. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.* That is, These calamities came upon them in consequence of their sins, and thou hast dealt with them as if those sins were forgiven. The fact that the tokens of his anger had passed away, and that his judgments were withdrawn, seemed to prove that their sins had been forgiven. The same form of expression here used—with the same words in Hebrew—occurs in Ps. xxxii. 5. See Notes on that passage. The language suggests the *idea* of an atonement. Literally, "Thou hast lifted up—or borne—the iniquity of thy people." ¶ *Thou hast covered all their sin.* So that it is hidden; and therefore thou dost treat them *as if* they were righteous, or *as if* there *were* no sin. The idea of *covering* is that expressed in the Hebrew word, which is commonly rendered *atonement*—כָּפַר, *kaphar*—to cover; to cover over; then, to cover over sin; to forgive. The idea suggested in this verse is, that when God withdraws the tokens of his displeasure, we may hope that he has pardoned the sin which was the cause of his anger.

3. *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.* That is, formerly; on the

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?

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occasion referred to. Thou didst so deal with thy people as to make it evident that thou didst cherish no anger or displeasure against them. ¶ *Thou hast turned* thyself, etc. Marg., *thine anger from waxing hot.* Literally, *Thou didst turn from the heat of thine anger.* His indignation was withdrawn, and he was again at peace with them. It is this fact, drawn from the former history of the people, which constitutes the basis of the appeal which follows.

4. *Turn us, O God of our salvation.* The God from whom salvation must come, and on whom we are dependent for it. The prayer here is, "turn *us;*" turn us from our sins; bring us to repentance; make us willing to forsake every evil way; and enable us to do it. This is the proper spirit always in prayer. The first thing is not that he would take away his wrath, but that he would dispose us to forsake our sins, and to turn to himself; that we may be led to abandon that which has brought his displeasure upon us, and *then* that he will cause his anger towards us to cease. We have no authority for asking God to turn away his judgments unless we are willing to forsake our sins; and in all cases we can hope for the Divine interposition and mercy, when the judgments of God are upon us, *only* as we are willing to turn from our iniquities. ¶ *And cause thine anger toward us to cease.* The word here used, and rendered *cause to cease*—פָּרַר, *parar* —means properly *to break;* then, *to violate;* and then, *to annul,* or to bring to an end. The idea here is, that if they were turned from sin, the cause of his anger would be removed, and would cease of course. Comp. Ps. lxxx. 3.

5. *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* Thine anger is so long continued that it seems as if it would never cease. ¶ *Wilt thou draw out thine anger.* Wilt thou protract or prolong it? The idea is that of a determined *purpose,* in retaining his anger, as if his wrath would cease of necessity unless there were such a direct exercise of will. ¶ *To all generations.* Literally, "from generation to generation." That is,—so that not merely the generation which has sinned, and which has brought down these tokens of displeasure, shall suffer, but the next, and the next, and the next, for ever. The plea is that the judgment might terminate, and not reach coming generations.

6. *Wilt thou not revive us again.* Literally, "Wilt thou not turn [or return], cause us to live;" that is, *and* cause us to live. The expression is equivalent to "*again*" as in our translation. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "Returning, wilt thou not give us life?" The word rendered *revive* means to live; to cause to live; and the idea is that of recovering them from their condition as a state of death; that is, restoring them *as if* they were dead. The *image* is that of returning spring after the death of winter, or the young grass when the rain descends after a long drought, and when everything seemed to be dead. So of the people referred to in the psalm; everything among them was *like* such a winter, when there is neither leaf, nor flower, nor grass, nor fruit; or *like* such a drought, when desolation is seen everywhere; or *like* the grave, where the dead repose. The image of spring, after a long and dreary winter, is one also which will properly describe the condition of the church when the influences of the

7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but [m] let them not turn again to folly.

[m] Ps. cxxx. 4.

Spirit have been long withheld, and when, under the visitations of grace, religion seems to live again among the people of God. ¶ *That thy people may rejoice in thee.* In thy favour; in thy presence; in *thee* as their God. (*a*) There is always *joy* in a revival of religion. Nothing is so much fitted to make a people happy; nothing diffuses so much joy. Comp. Acts viii. 8. (*b*) This is particularly joy *in God.* It is because he comes near; because he manifests his mercy; because he shows his power and his grace.

7. *Shew us thy mercy, O* LORD. That is, Manifest thy mercy in returning to us; in forgiving our sins; in taking from us the tokens of thy displeasure. ¶ *And grant us thy salvation.* Salvation or deliverance from our present trouble and calamities.

8. *I will hear what God the* LORD *will speak.* I, the psalmist; I, representing the people as looking to God. The state of mind here is that of patient listening; of a willingness to hear God, whatever God should say; of confidence in him that what he would say would be favourable to his people,—would be words of mercy and of peace. Whatever God should command, the speaker was willing to yield to it; whatever God should say, he would believe; whatever God should enjoin, he would do; whatever God should ask him to surrender, he would resign. There was no other resource but God, and there was entire confidence in him that whatever he should say, require, or do, would be right. ¶ *For he will speak peace unto his people.* Whatever he shall say will tend to their peace, their blessedness, their prosperity. He loves his people, and there may be a confident assurance that all he will say will tend to promote their welfare. ¶ *And to his saints.* His holy ones; his people. ¶ *But let them not turn again to folly.* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "To his saints and to those who turn the heart unto him." Our common version, however, has expressed the sense of the Hebrew; and it contains very important truths and admonitions. (*a*) The way which they had formerly pursued was *folly.* It was not mere *sin,* but there was in it the element of *foolishness* as well as *wickedness.* All sin may be contemplated in this twofold aspect:—*as* wickedness, and *as* foolishness. Comp. Ps. xiv. 1; lxxiii. 3. (*b*) There was great danger that they *would* turn again to their former course; that they would forget alike the punishment which had come upon them; their own resolutions; and their promises made to God. Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 10, 11, 17, 18, 31, 32. Nothing is more common than for a people who have been afflicted with heavy judgments to forget all that they promised to do *if* those judgments should be withdrawn; or for an individual who has been raised up from a bed of sickness—from the borders of the grave—to forget the solemn resolutions which he formed on what seemed to be a dying bed,—perhaps becoming more thoughtless and wicked than he was before, as if to make reprisals for the wrong done him by his Maker, or as if to recover the time that was lost by sickness. (*c*) This passage, therefore, is a solemn admonition to all who have been afflicted, and who have been restored, that they return not to their former course of life. To this they should feel themselves exhorted (1) by their obligations to their benefactor; (2) by the remembrance of their own solemn vows

9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness [n] and peace have kissed *each other*.

[n] Isa. xxxii. 17.

made in a time of sincerity and honesty, and when they saw things as they really are; and (3) by the assurance that *if* they do return to their sin and folly, heavier judgments will come upon them; that the patience of God will be exhausted; and that he will bear with them no longer. Comp. John v. 14, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

9. *Surely his salvation.* His help; his aid. The word here does not mean *salvation* in the restricted use of the term as applied to the future life, but it means deliverance of *all* kinds—rescue from trouble, danger, calamity. ¶ Is *nigh them that fear him.* All who truly reverence him, and look to him in a proper manner. They may expect his aid; they may be sure that he will *soon* come to help them. This expresses the confident assurance of the author of the psalm that God *would* interpose in the troubles of the nation, and would deliver them. ¶ *That glory may dwell in our land.* (*a*) The glory or honour of having such a God to dwell among them;—and (*b*) the peace, the prosperity, the happiness, which will be the consequence—of his interposition. The idea is, that this would be a *permanent* thing; that this honour or glory would then make the land its dwelling-place.

10. *Mercy and truth are met together.* That is, in the Divine dealings referred to in the psalm. There has been a blending of mercy and truth in those dealings; or, both have been manifested;—truth, in the Divine statements, threatenings, and promises; and mercy, in forgiving sin, and in sparing the people. There is no *necessary* contradiction between truth and mercy; that is, the one does not *necessarily* conflict with the other, though the one *seems* to conflict with the other when punishment is threatened for crime, and yet mercy is shown to the offender,—that is, where the punishment is not inflicted, and the offender is treated *as if* he had not sinned. In this respect, the great difficulty in all human governments has been to maintain both; to be true to the threatening of the law, and at the same time to pardon the guilty. Human governments have never been able to reconcile the two. If punishment is inflicted up to the full measure of the threatening, there is no manifestation of mercy; if mercy is shown, there is a departure from justice, or a declaration that the threatenings of the law are not, in all cases, to be inflicted:—that is, there is, to that extent, an abandonment of justice. Human governments have always felt the need, in their practical operations, of some device like *an atonement*, by which the two might be blended, and both secured. Such a method of reconciliation or of securing both objects—truth, in the fulfilment of the threat, and mercy towards the offender—has never been (and could not be) acted on in a human administration. It is only in the Divine government that this has been accomplished, where a true and perfect regard has been paid to *truth* in the threatening, and to *mercy* toward the guilty by an atonement. It is true, indeed, that this passage does not refer to the atonement made by the Redeemer, but there can scarcely be found a better illustration of that work than occurs in the language here used. Comp. Notes on Rom. iii. 26. See also my work on the "Atonement," chapters ii., iii.* ¶ *Righteousness.* In the maintenance of law, or the manifestation of justice. That is, in this case, God had shown his justice in bringing

* And "Way of Salvation," chap. xvii.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good; [o] and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness [p] shall go before him, and [q] shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

[o] Ps. lxxxiv. 11. [p] Ps. lxxxix. 14. [q] Ps. cxix. 35.

these calamities on the people for their sins. In the work of the Redeemer this was done by his being "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" by the fact that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," and that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isa. liii. 5, 6. ¶ *And peace.* Pardon; mercy; restoration to favour. In the case of the Hebrew people this was done by his removing the calamities which their sins had brought upon them, and by his returning favour. In the work of redemption, it was done by the pardon of sin, and by reconciliation to God. ¶ *Have kissed* each other. As friends and lovers do; as they do who have been long separated; as they do who, after having been alienated and estranged, are made friends again. In like manner, there seemed to be an alienation—an estrangement—a state of hostility—between righteousness and mercy, between justice and pardon, but they have been now united as separated and alienated friends are, and have embraced each other as such friends do; that is, they blend together in beautiful harmony.

11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth.* As plants do—for this is the meaning of the word. The blessings of truth and righteousness would be like the grass, the shrubs, the flowers, which spring up from the ground,—and like the rain and the sunbeams which come from heaven. Truth would spring up everywhere, and abound in all lands, as plants, and shrubs, and grass spring up all over the earth. There is not an intended *contrast* between the two clauses of this verse, as if truth came from *the earth*, and righteousness *from heaven;* but the idea is that they would come in a manner that might be compared with the way in which God's other abundant blessings are bestowed, as springing, on the one hand, from the fertility of the earth, and on the other, from the rain, the dew, and the sunbeam. ¶ *And righteousness shall look down from heaven.* Shall descend from heaven; or shall come from above,—*as if* the rain, and the sun looked down from heaven, and *saw* the wants of man. The original word here rendered *look down*—שָׁקַף, *shakaph*—means to *lay upon*, or over; then, to project, *lie over*, look forward; then, to *overhang;* and the idea here is that it *bent over*, or *leaned forward* to look at the necessities of man—as one does who is desirous of gazing at an object. There was an *anxiety*, so to speak, to come *to* the earth—to meet the human need. As the rain and the sunbeams seem *anxious* to bestow their blessings on man, so God *seems* anxious to bestow on man the blessings of salvation.

12. *Yea, the* LORD *shall give* that which is *good.* All that is truly good:—all needful temporal blessings; all blessings connected with salvation. ¶ *And our land shall yield her increase.* There shall be fruitful seasons, and the earth shall produce abundance. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxvii. 6.

13. *Righteousness shall go before him.* Shall anticipate his coming, and prepare his way. The *idea* seems to be, that in order to his appearing, there would be a proclamation of righteousness, and a preparation for his advent by the diffusion of righteousness among the people; in other words, the nation, in the prospect of his coming, would turn from sin, and would seek to be prepared for his appearing. Thus John proclaimed the coming of the Redeemer, "*Repent ye*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

PSALM LXXXVI.

A Prayer [1] of David.

BOW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

2 Preserve my soul, for I *am*

[1] Or, being a Psalm *of*.

Matt. iii. 2. So also "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Matt. iii. 3. ¶ *And shall set* us *in the way of his steps.* This might be rendered, "and set its steps for a way;" that is, the steps which would be taken by him would indicate the way in which his people should walk. Perhaps, however, the common interpretation best expresses the sense of the passage. According to that, the idea is, that the effect of his coming would be to dispose men to walk in the way of the steps which he took; to be his imitators and followers. The general thought is, that his coming would have the effect of turning the people to the paths of righteousness and truth. This is the designed effect of all the visitations of God to our world.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David; and there is nothing in the psalm that is contrary to this supposition. Why it has its place among the psalms which are designated as the compositions of "the sons of Korah," and had not its place among those which are ascribed to David (Ps. i.-lxx.) we have no means of ascertaining. It is not said, however, that those were the *only* psalms of David, and there is no improbability in supposing that he may have composed others. It is not improperly named "*a prayer*," since it is made up mostly of petitions, though this is true of others which are *called* "psalms," and though it is true that this one has so much of *praise* in it that it might also (as it is in the margin) be designated *a psalm.* The occasion on which it was composed is unknown, but it has been commonly supposed that it was written in the time of the persecutions under Saul. De Wette regards it as a national song composed in a time of national trouble.

This psalm does not admit of any minute subdivision. It is made up of earnest prayers, with reasons why those prayers should be answered; and perhaps the leading practical suggestion which would properly follow from the psalm is, that it is proper for us, in our prayers, to urge reasons why they should be answered: the reasons why we pray at all. We cannot, indeed, suppose that we can suggest anything which would not occur to the Divine mind, but in all our prayers there *is* some reason why we pray; there *are* reasons why we ask the particular things which are the burden of our supplications, and it cannot be improper, in order that our own minds at least may be suitably impressed, to mention those reasons when we come before God.

1. *Bow down thine ear, O* LORD, *hear me.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1. ¶ *For I* am *poor and needy.* This is the *reason* here assigned why God should hear him. It is not a plea of merit. It is not that there was any claim on God in the fact that he was a poor and needy man,—a sinner helpless and dependent, or that it would be any injustice if God should *not* hear, for a sinner has no *claim* to favour; but it is that this was a condition in which the aid of God was *needed*, and in which it was proper or *appropriate* for God to hear prayer, and to render help. We may always make our helplessness, our weakness, our poverty, our need, a ground of appeal to God;—not as a claim of justice, but as a case in which he will glorify himself by a gracious interposition. It is also to be remarked that it is a matter of unspeakable thankfulness that the "poor and needy" *may* call upon God; that they will be *as* welcome as any class of men; that there is no condition of poverty and want so low that we are debarred from the privilege of approaching One who has infinite resources, and who is as *willing* to help as he is *able.*

2. *Preserve my soul.* Preserve, or

[1] holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth [r] in thee.

3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee [2] daily.

4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

5 For [s] thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

[1] Or, *one whom thou favourest.*
[r] Isa. xxvi. 3.
[2] Or, *all the day.*
[s] Joel ii. 13.

keep, my life;—for so the word rendered *soul* means in this place, as it does commonly in the Scriptures. ¶ *For I* am *holy.* Marg., *One whom thou favourest.* The Hebrew word—חָסִיד, *khasid*—means properly, benevolent, kind; then, good, merciful, gracious; and then pious, godly. Ps. xxx. 4; xxxi. 23; xxxvii. 28. The *ground* of the plea here is, that he was a friend of God; and that it was proper on that account to look to him for protection. He does not say that he was holy in such a sense that he had a *claim* on that account to the favour of God, or that his personal holiness was a ground of salvation; but the idea is, that he had devoted himself to God, and that it was, therefore, proper to look to him for his protection in the time of danger. A child looks to a parent for protection, because he *is* a child; a citizen looks to the protection of the laws, because he *is* a citizen; and so the people of God may look to him for protection, because they *are* his people. In all this there is no plea of merit, but there is the recognition of what is proper in the case, and what may be expected and hoped for. ¶ *Save thy servant.* Save him from threatening danger and from death. ¶ *That trusteth in thee. Because* I trust or confide in thee. I go nowhere else for protection; I rely on no one else. I look to thee alone, and I do this with entire confidence. A man who does this has a *right* to look to God for protection, and to expect that God will interpose in his behalf.

3. *Be merciful unto me, O Lord.* It was *mercy* after all that he relied on, and not *justice.* It was not because he had any *claim* on the ground that he was "holy," but all that he had and hoped for was to be traced to the *mercy* of God. ¶ *For I cry unto thee daily.* Marg., as in Heb., *All the day.* The meaning is, that he did this constantly, or without intermission.

4. *Rejoice the soul of thy servant.* Cause *me* to rejoice; to wit, by thy gracious interposition, and by delivering me from danger and death. ¶ *For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxiv. 4. The idea is that of *arousing* himself, or *exerting* himself, as one does who makes strenuous efforts to obtain an object. He was not languid, or indifferent; he did not put forth merely weak and fitful efforts to find God, but he *bent his whole powers* to that end; he arouses himself thoroughly to seek the Divine help. Languid and feeble efforts in seeking after God will be attended with no success. In so great a matter,—when so much depends on the Divine favour,—when such great interests are at stake,—the whole soul should be roused to one great and strenuous effort;—not that we can obtain his favour by force or power, and not that any strength of ours will prevail of itself, but (*a*) because nothing less will indicate the proper intensity of desire; and (*b*) because such is his appointment in regard to the manner in which we are to seek his favour. Comp. Matt. vii. 7, 8; Luke xiii. 24; xvi. 16.

5. *For thou, Lord,* art *good,* etc. This is another reason why God should hear his prayer; and it is a reason which may be properly urged at all times, and by all classes of persons. It is founded on the benevolence of God; on the fulness of his

6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble I will [t] call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

8 Among the gods *there is* none [u] like unto thee, O Lord; neither [v] *are there any works* like unto thy works.

9 All [w] nations whom thou hast made shall come and wor-

t Ps. l. 15. *u* Isa. xl. 18, 25. *v* Deut. iii. 24. *w* Rev. xv. 4.

mercy to all that invoke his name. We should call in vain on a God who was *not* merciful and ready to forgive; but in the Divine character there is the most ample foundation for such an appeal. In his benevolence; in his readiness to forgive; in the plenitude of his mercy, God is all that a penitent sinner could wish him to be. For if such a sinner should endeavour to describe what he would *desire* to find in God as a ground of appeal in his prayers, he could not express his feelings in language more full and free than God has himself employed about his own readiness to pardon and save. The language of the Bible on this subject would express, better than any language which he could himself employ, what in those circumstances he would *wish* to find God to be.

6. *Give ear, O* LORD, *unto my prayer,* etc. See Notes on Ps. v. 1.

7. *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee.* That is, I do it now; I have done it; I will do it. The language implies a *habit,* or a steady purpose of mind, that in all times of trouble he would make God his refuge. It was this fixed purpose—this regular habit—which was now the ground of his confidence. A man who *always* makes God his refuge, who has no other ground of reliance, may feel assured that God will interpose and save him. ¶ *For thou wilt answer me.* This also implies a fixed and steady assurance of mind, applicable not only to this case, but to all similar cases. He had firm confidence in God at all times; an unwavering belief that God is a hearer of prayer. This is a just foundation of hope when we approach God. Comp. James i. 6, 7.

8. *Among the gods* there is *none like unto thee, O Lord.* Among all those which are worshipped as gods there is no one that can hear and save. The psalmist, in respect to prayer, and to help to be obtained by prayer, compares his own condition with that of those who worshipped false gods. He had a God who could hear; they had none. A true child of God now in trouble may properly compare his condition in this respect with that of those who make no profession of religion; who do not profess to worship God, or to have a God. To him there is a throne of grace which is always accessible; to them there is none. There is One to whom he may always pray; they profess to have no one on whom they can call. ¶ *Neither* are there any works *like unto thy works.* That is, as wrought by those "gods." There is nothing they have done which can be a ground of confidence that can be compared with what thou hast done. The allusion is to the power, the wisdom, and the skill evinced in the works of creation, and in the merciful interpositions of Providence. From these the psalmist derives a proof that God is able to save. There is no such argument to which the worshippers of false gods can appeal in the time of trouble.

9. *All nations whom thou hast made shall come,* etc. In this verse the psalmist expresses his belief that the conviction which he entertained about the ability of God to save—about his being the only true God—would yet pervade all the nations of the earth; that they all would yet be convinced that *he* was the true God, and would come and worship him alone. So clear to him seemed

ship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou [z] *art* God alone.

x Deut. xxxii. 39; 1 Cor. viii. 4.

11 Teach [y] me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite [z] my heart to fear thy name.

y Ps. cxix. 33.
z Jer. xxiv. 7; Phil. iii. 13.

to be the evidence of the existence and perfections of God that he did not doubt that all men would come yet to see it also, and to acknowledge him. Comp. Isa. ii. 2, 3; lx. 3–14; Ps. ii. 8; lxxii. 17. ¶ *And shall glorify thy name.* Shall honour thee as the true God. They will renounce their idols; they will come and worship thee. This belief—this hope—is held out through the entire volume of revealed truth. It cheered and encouraged the hearts of the saints of the Old Testament and the New; and it may and should cheer and encourage our hearts. It is not less certain because it seems to be long delayed. To the view of man this is *all that is certain* in the future. No man can predict what will occur in regard to any of the existing political institutions on the earth—either the monarchies of the old world, or the republics of the new.* No man can tell in reference to the arts; to the sciences; to social life; to manners; to the cities and towns which now exist on the earth, what they *will be* in the far distant future. Only one thing is certain in that future—that the kingdom of God will be set up, and that the Redeemer's throne will be established over all the earth; that the time is to come when "all nations shall come and worship before God, and shall glorify his name."

* This I wrote some six years ago. Now, on revising it for publication (Oct. 13, 1864), how soon—how strangely—how fearfully—has the course of things in our country illustrated it. Who, six years since, could have foretold what has actually occurred during that time in our then happy Republic? It *seemed* to be permanent and enduring; and we made our boast to the other nations of the earth that it *would* be so. Alas! how have we been rebuked for our boastings; how have we been taught that no human sagacity can predict what will occur to any nation or to any government!

10. *For thou* art *great, and doest wondrous things.* Things fitted to excite wonder or admiration; things which lie beyond the power of any creature, and which could be performed by no one but a being of almighty power. A God who could do these things could also do that which the psalmist asked of him, for what God actually *does* proves that there is nothing within the limits of possibility which he cannot perform. The greatness and the power of God are reasons why we should appeal to him in our weakness, and in our times of trouble. ¶ *Thou* art *God alone.* Thou only canst do what a God can do, or what belongs to God. In those things, therefore, which require the interposition of Divine power our appeal must be to thee alone. So in the matter of salvation.

11. *Teach me thy way, O* LORD. That is, in the present emergency. Show me what thou wouldst have me to do that I may obtain thy favour, and thy gracious help. ¶ *I will walk in thy truth.* I will live and act in accordance with what thou dost declare to be true. Whatever that may be, I will pursue it, having no will of my own. ¶ *Unite my heart to fear thy name.* That is, to worship, obey, and honour thee. (*a*) The *end* which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honour him; (*b*) the *means* which he saw to be necessary for this was that his "heart" might be "*united*" in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him. The *word* rendered unite—יַחֵד, *yâ-lhhad*—occurs as a verb only in three

12 I [a] will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

13 For great [b] *is* thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered [c] my soul from the lowest [1] hell.

14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies

a Ps. cxlv. 1, 2. *b* Ps. ciii. 11. *c* 1 Thess. i. 10. [1] Or, *grave.*

places. In Gen. xlix. 6, it is rendered *united:* "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou *united.*" In Isa. xiv. 20, it is translated *joined:* "Thou shalt not be *joined* with them." The *adverb*—יַחַד, *ya-khad,* —occurs often, and is rendered *together,* Gen. xiii. 6; xxii. 6, 8, 19; xxxvi. 7; *et sæpe.* The *idea* is that of union, or conjunction; of being together; of constituting *one;* and this is accomplished in the heart when there is one great ruling object before the mind which nothing is allowed to interfere with. It may be added, that there is no more appropriate prayer which a man can offer than that his heart *may* have such a unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose.

12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart.* This is but carrying out the idea in the previous verse. He would give his *whole* heart to God. He would allow nothing to divide or distract his affections. He would withhold nothing from God. ¶ *And I will glorify thy name for evermore.* Not merely in the present emergency; but I will do it ever onward—even to eternity. The meaning is, that he would in all cases, and at all times—in this world and in the world to come—honour God. He would acknowledge no God *but* him, and he *would* honour him as God.

13. *For great* is *thy mercy toward me.* In respect to me; or, Thou hast manifested great mercy to me; to wit, in past times. He makes use of this now as an argument or reason why God should interpose again. (*a*) He had shown on former occasions that he had *power* to save; (*b*) the fact that he *had* thus treated him as his friend was a reason why he should now befriend him. ¶ *And thou hast delivered my soul.* My life. The meaning is, that he had kept him alive in times of imminent danger. At the same time David could say, as every child of God can say, that God had delivered his *soul* in the strict and proper sense of the term—from sin, and death, and *hell* itself. ¶ *From the lowest hell.* Marg., *grave;* Hebrew, *sheol*—שְׁאוֹל; Greek, ᾅδης. See the word explained in the Notes on Isa. xiv. 9. Comp. Notes on Job x. 21, 22. The word rendered *lowest* means simply *under,* or *beneath:—the grave or hades beneath.* The idea of *lowest,* or the superlative degree, is not necessarily implied in the word. The idea of the grave *as* deep, or *as* under us, however, *is* implied, and the psalmist means to say that he had been saved from that deep dwelling-place—from the abode of departed spirits, to which the dead descend under ground. The meaning is, that he had been kept alive; but the greatness of the mercy is designed to be set forth by having before the mind a vivid idea of the darkness, the horror, and the gloom of the world to which the dead descend, and where they dwell.

14. *O God, the proud are risen against me.* Men who are self-confident, ambitious, haughty; who do not regard the welfare or the rights of others; who are disposed to trample down all others in order that they may accomplish their own purposes; these are the men who have opposed me and sought my life. This would apply either to the time of Saul or of Absalom. In both these cases there were men who would correspond to this description. ¶ *And the assemblies of violent* men. Marg., *terrible.*

of [1] violent *men* have sought after my soul, and have not set thee [d] before them.

15 But [e] thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy [f] and truth.

16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength [g] unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

[1] *terrible.* [d] Ps. x. 4. [e] Neh. ix. 17. [f] Ps. lxxxv. 10. [g] Isa. xlv. 24.

The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "the synagogue of the wicked." The word rendered *violent* means properly terrible, inspiring terror; then, violent, fierce, lawless, tyrants. The idea here is that they pursued their object by violence and not by right; they did it in a fierce and savage manner, or in such a way as to inspire terror. The word *assembly* here means merely that they were banded together; what was done was the result of a conspiracy or combination. ¶ *Have sought after my soul.* After my life. ¶ *And have not set thee before them.* They do not fear thee; they do not act as if in thy presence; they have no regard for thee; for thy law; for thy favour; for thy threatenings.

15. *But thou, O Lord,* art *a God full of compassion,* etc. See Notes on ver. 5. The words rendered "long-suffering" mean that there was and would be *delay* in his anger; that it was not soon excited; that he did not act from passion or sudden resentment; that he endured the conduct of sinners long without rising up to punish them; that he was not quick to take vengeance, but bore with them patiently. On this account the psalmist, though conscious that he was a sinner, hoped and pleaded that God would save him. ¶ *Plenteous in . . . truth.* That is, in faithfulness. When thou hast made a promise, thou wilt faithfully keep it.

16. *O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me.* Look upon me;—as if God were now turned away, and were unmindful of his danger, his wants, and his pleading. The expression is equivalent to those in which he prays that God would *incline his ear* to him. See vers. 1, 6, and Notes on Ps. v. 1. ¶ *Give thy strength unto thy servant.* Give such strength as proceeds from thee, and such as will accomplish what thou alone canst effect. Enable me to act *as if* clothed with Divine power. The ground of the plea here is, that he was the "*servant*" of God, and he might, therefore, hope for God's interposition. ¶ *And save the son of thine handmaid.* This is, as far as I know, the only separate allusion which David ever makes to his mother individually, unless the passage in Ps. xxxv. 14—"I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother"—be supposed to refer to his *own* mother. But we have elsewhere no such mention of his mother as can give us any idea of her character, and indeed it is not easy to determine who she was. The language here, however, would seem to imply that she was a pious woman, for the words "thy handmaid," as employed in the Scriptures, would most naturally suggest that idea. If so, then the ground of the plea here is that his mother was a child of God; that she had lived for his service; and that she had trained up her children for him. David now prays that, as he had been devoted to God by her, and had thus been trained up, God would remember all this, and would interfere in his behalf. Can it be wrong to urge before God, as a reason for his interposition, that we have been devoted to him by parental faithfulness and prayer; that we have been consecrated to him by baptism; that we have been trained up for his service; that in reference to us high hopes were cherished that we might carry out the purposes of pious parents, and live to accomplish what was so dear to their hearts? He who has had a pious mother has

17 Shew me a token [h] for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed; because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

[h] 2 Cor. v. 5.

entered on life under great advantages; he has been placed under solemn responsibilities; he is permitted to hope that a mother's prayers will not be forgotten, but that her example, her teachings, and her piety will shed a hallowed influence on all the paths of life till he joins her in heaven.

17. *Shew me a token for good*, etc. Hebrew, "Make me a sign for good;" that is, Do that for me in my trouble which will be an evidence that thou dost favour me, and wilt save me. Let there be such a manifest interposition in my behalf that others may see it, and may be convinced that thou art God, and that thou art the Protector and Friend of those who put their trust in thee. We need not suppose that the psalmist refers here to a *miracle* in his behalf. Any interposition which would save him from the hands of his enemies,—which would defeat their purposes,—which would rescue him when there seemed to be no help, would be such an evidence that they could not doubt that he was the friend of God. Thus they would be made "*ashamed*" of their purposes; that is, they would be disappointed and confounded; and there would be furnished a new proof that God was the protector of all who put their trust in him.

PSALM LXXXVII.

This psalm, like some others, is entitled "*a psalm* or *song*;" that is, it so far combined the properties of *both* a "psalm" *and* a "song" that it might be called by either name. See Notes on the title to Ps. lxv. The phrase "for the sons of Korah" may mean, as in the margin, "*of* the sons of Korah." See Notes on the title to Ps. xlii.

The *occasion* on which the psalm was composed is unknown. The *design* of the psalm is obvious. It is to exalt

PSALM LXXXVII.

A Psalm *or* Song [1] for the sons of Korah.

HIS foundation *is* in the holy [i] mountains

[1] Or, *of*. [i] Ps. xlviii. 1.

Zion as a place to dwell in, and to state the privileges or advantages of having been born there; the honour of such a birth, and the benefit which would be connected with it, from having been brought early under the influence of the true religion, and from having been trained up amidst its institutions. The practical truth which is suggested by the psalm is the honour and benefit of having been born in a land where the true religion prevails; of having been born in connexion with the church; of having been early devoted to God; and of having had the benefits of a religious training. The foundation of what is said in the psalm is the honour which we naturally associate with the idea of *birth*;—birth as connected with a family of distinguished worth, wealth, or rank; birth as connected with a particular country, city, or town.

1. *His foundation.* This is an abrupt commencement of the psalm. The adjective "*his*" has been supposed by some to refer to the psalm itself, and this expression has been considered to be a part of the title to the psalm, meaning that the foundation of the psalm is the holy mountain where the praises of God were celebrated; that is Zion. This, however, is a forced and unnatural interpretation. The most obvious explanation is to refer it to God, and the meaning is, that his "foundation," or that which he had founded and established, to wit, the place for his worship, or for the institutions of religion, was in the holy mountains of Jerusalem. It would seem that the psalmist was contemplating the city,—looking on its walls, and its palaces, and especially on the place which had been reared for the worship of God, and that he breaks out in this abrupt manner, by saying that this was what God had *founded*; that here he had established his home; that here was the place where he was worshipped, and where

2 The [k] LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things [l] are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab [m] and Babylon to them that

k Ps. lxxviii. 67, 68.

l Isa. liv. 2, etc.; Rev. xxi. 2, etc.

m Isa. li. 9.

he dwelt; that this was the place which he loved more than all the other places where the descendants of Jacob dwelt. ¶ Is *in the holy mountains.* The mountains of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is surrounded by hills, and within the city itself there were the hills of Zion, Moriah, Acra, and Bezethah; See Notes on Matt. ii. 1. These sacred hills God had selected as the place of his solemn worship—of his own abode. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlviii. 1, 2.

2. *The* LORD *loveth the gates of Zion.* Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 68. The gates of a city were the places of concourse; where business was transacted; where courts were held. The particular allusion here seems to be to the thronging multitudes pressing into the city for public worship—the numbers that gathered together at the great feasts and festivals of the nation; and the meaning is, that he looked with more pleasure on such multitudes as they thronged the gates, pressing in that they might worship him, than on any other scene in the land. ¶ *More than all the dwellings of Jacob.* Than any of the places where the descendants of Jacob, or where his people dwell. Much as he might be pleased with their quiet abodes, with their peace, prosperity, and order, and with the fact that his worship was daily celebrated in those happy families, yet he had superior pleasure in the multitudes that crowded the ways to the place where they would publicly acknowledge him as their God.

3. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.* Jerusalem, called the "city of God" as being the place of his peculiar abode on earth. The word rendered "are spoken" may mean either "*have been* spoken," or "*are to be* spoken;" that is, either, such things *have been* said, or they *may* be said. They have been placed on record; or, they may now be put on record concerning thee. Probably the former is the true meaning; and the language would embrace such points as these: (1) Those things which had been spoken as to its beauty of situation; its magnificence and splendour. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlviii. 2, 3, 12, 13. (2) Such things as had been spoken or recorded in regard to its future prosperity, its triumphs, and its influence in the world;—the promises which had been made in reference to the prosperity of Zion, and the spread of the true religion from that point as a centre. Comp. Notes on Isa. ii. 3. The Old Testament abounds with promises concerning the future glory of Zion—the "glorious things" that are spoken respecting the final triumph of religion in the world. Of this the statement here is to be mainly understood, where *Zion* is referred to as the seat of the true religion, and as therefore the representative of the true church on earth. It is that of which the real record has been made, and not merely of Jerusalem or Zion as a city. *That* might pass away; the church, of which that was the representative, will endure for ever. Comp. Isa. liv. 1–3; lx.; Rev. xxi. 2–4.

4. *I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon,* etc. The word *Rahab* here refers to Egypt. See Isa. li. 9. It is also applied to Egypt in Ps. lxxxix. 10. The reason why the name was given to Egypt is not certainly known. The Hebrew word properly means *fierceness, insolence, pride;* and it *may* have been given to Egypt by the Hebrews on account of its haughtiness, pride, and insolence. It has been supposed by some (Jablonski, Opusc. i. 228) that the name is of Egyptian origin, but this has not

know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this *man* was born there.

5 And of Zion [n] it shall be said,

[n] Gal. iv. 26, 27.

[o] This and that man was born in her; and the [p] Highest himself shall establish her.

[o] Isa. xlviii. 21—23; lx. 1—9.
[p] Ps. xlviii. 8.

been clearly made out. (Gesenius, *Lex.*) Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, are here mentioned as among the best known nations and cities of the world; as places where it would commonly be regarded as an honour to have been born. The meaning is, "I will refer to these as places well-known and distinguished; I will refer to the honour of having been born *there;* but great as is such an honour, the honour of having been born in Zion is far above that; it conveys the idea of a much higher distinction; it should be more sacredly cherished as among those things on which men value themselves." The word "*I*" here seems to have reference to the psalmist, and not to God. The psalmist is mentioning what to *him* would seem to have a claim to the highest honour. ¶ *Philistia.* The western portion of Palestine, from which the whole country was afterwards named. See Notes on Ps. lx. 8; comp. Ps. cviii. 9; Isa. xiv. 29, 31. ¶ *And Tyre.* See Notes on Ps. xlv. 12; Isa. xxiii. 1. ¶ *With Ethiopia.* Hebrew, *Cush.* The reference here is probably to the southern portion of Arabia. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 31; Isa. xviii. 1. ¶ *This* man *was born there.* That is, It would be said of individuals that they were born in one of those places, and it would be regarded as an honour thus to have been born. Men would pride themselves on the fact that they were born there, and the world would hold them in esteem on that account. This refers to a very natural, and a very common feeling among men. We can, of course, claim no credit, and deserve no real honour, on account of the place where we happen to have been born; but the fact that one *has* been born in a place distinguished for its advantages and its fame,—in a place where liberty, religion, and the arts have flourished,—in a place renowned for its public spirit, and for producing illustrious men,—may be properly accounted as an occasion for gratitude, and as a stimulus to high and honourable efforts, and may thus *be made* an important auxiliary to virtue, patriotism, and piety.

5. *And of Zion it shall be said.* In respect to Zion; or, in honour of Zion. Men shall regard it as a privilege to have been born in Zion. They shall speak of such a birth as a marked and honoured distinction. ¶ *This and that man,* etc. Designating them, or pointing them out, as having been born there. Those in a crowd, those passing along, those brought in any way to notice, will be spoken of in reference to their birth in Zion, and will be treated with a degree of favour and esteem, arising from their birth there corresponding to what those receive who are born in Egypt, Babylon, or Tyre. They will not be shunned and avoided on account of their birth as if it were ignoble, but they will be honoured for it. ¶ *And the Highest himself shall establish her.* Will establish Zion, or will give it prosperity and perpetuity. This, too, is what would be "*said*" respecting Zion by such as should speak of those born there; and it indicates (*a*) their *conviction* that it *would* be permanent; and (*b*) their *desire* that it *might* be:—that a place so honoured and distinguished might be perpetuated. The practical truths suggested by this verse, as applied to the church, are (1) That it is a privilege to have been born in connexion with the Christian church; to have had a Christian parentage, and to have been early dedicated to God; (2) that the time will come when this will be a ground of commendation, or when it

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth [q] up the people, *that* this *man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments [r] *shall be there:* all my springs [s] *are* in thee.

[q] Ez. xiii. 9. [r] 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. [s] Ps. xlvi. 4.

will be *spoken of* as an honour, or when it will be regarded as presumptive evidence of a claim to esteem in the eyes of the world, that one was born in the church, was early devoted to God, and was trained up under the influences of religion; (3) that the character of those who are thus born, and who are thus trained up, will constitute, in the view of the world, evidence of the stability of the church, and proof that God regards it with favour. It has not *always* been deemed an honour, or a passport to favour, to have been born in the church, but the time *will* come when this will be universally so; and, even now, no child can fully appreciate the honour and the real advantage of having been born in a family where God is served, and of having been early consecrated to God by parental purpose, by prayer, and by Christian baptism.

6. *The* LORD *shall count.* That is, God himself will honour those who are so born. In the previous verse, the effect of such a birth was described as securing honour from men. Here a higher honour is adverted to, —that which will be derived from God himself. ¶ *When he writeth up the people,* etc. The word rendered *people* here is in the plural number. At the time of making an enrolment of the people, or taking an account or a *census* of the nations, he would mark, or cause to be marked, with peculiar honour the man that had his birth in Zion. Out of such would his own people be taken, and those thus born would have an honour which no one else would receive from him. He would not mark with any peculiar approbation those who had been born in Egypt, in Babylon, or in Tyre, but he would mark with special interest those who had been born in Zion. The practical truth suggested here is, that God will in the main take his people from among those who have been born in the church. As a matter of fact, while it is true that others are converted and added to the church, the great mass of church-members consist of those who have been born of Christian parents; who have been early dedicated to God; and who have been trained up for his service. See Notes on Isa. xliv. 3–5.

7. *As well the singers as the players on instruments* shall be there. Literally, "The singers as the players on instruments." The image is that of a musical procession, where the singers go before, followed by those who play on various instruments of music. The idea seems to be that when the number of the true friends of God shall be made up, or shall all be enrolled, there will be a triumphal procession; or, they are seen by the psalmist, moving before God *as* in a triumphal procession. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxv. 10. Perhaps the reference is to heaven,—the true Zion; to the assembling of all who shall have been born in Zion, and who shall have become citizens of the true Zion, the Jerusalem above. ¶ *All my springs* are *in thee.* The word rendered *springs* means properly a place of fountains (see Notes on Ps. lxxxiv. 6), and also a fountain, Gen. vii. 11; viii. 2. It thus becomes an emblem of happiness; of delight; of pleasure; and the idea here is that the highest happiness of the psalmist was found in what is here referred to by the word *thee.* That word may refer either to God or to Zion; but as the subject of the psalm is *Zion,* it is most natural to suppose that the reference is to that. Thus it accords with the sentiment so often found in the Psalms, where the writer expresses his love for Zion; his pleasure in its solemnities; his

desire to abide there as his permanent home. Comp. Ps. xxiii. 6; lxxxiv. 2–4, 10. The idea has been beautifully expressed by Dr. Dwight, in his version of Ps. cxxxvii. 6:—

"I love thy church, O God;
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.

"If e'er my heart forget
Her welfare or her woe,
Let every joy this heart forsake,
And every grief o'erflow.

"Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise."

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is altogether of a mournful and desponding character. The author is a sufferer; he is expecting to die; he fears to die; he longs to live; his mind is overwhelmed with gloom which does not seem to be irradiated by one ray of hope or consolation. It is, in this respect, unlike most of the psalms which relate to sickness, to sorrow, to suffering; for in those psalms generally there springs up, in answer to prayer, a gleam of hope,—some cheerful view,—some sustaining prospect;—so that, though a psalm *begins* in despondency and gloom, it *ends* with joy and triumph. Comp., among others, Ps. vi. 9, 10; vii. 17; xiii. 6; xlii. 8, 11; lvi. 11–13; lix. 16; lxix. 34, 36. But in this psalm there is *no* relief; there is *no* comfort. As the Book of Psalms was designed to be useful in all ages, and to all classes of people, and as such a state of mind as that described in this psalm might occur again and often—it was proper that such a condition of utter despondency, even in a good man, should be described, in order that others might see that such feelings are not necessarily inconsistent with true religion, and do not prove that even such a sufferer is not a child of God. It is probable that this psalm was designed to illustrate what *may* occur when disease is such as to produce deep mental darkness and sorrow. And the Book of Psalms would have been incomplete for the use of the church, if there had not been at least *one* such psalm in the collection.

The psalm is said, in the title, to be "A Psalm or Song for (marg., *of*) the sons of Korah"—combining, in some way unknown to us, as several of the other psalms do, the properties of both a psalm and a song. The phrase, "for the sons of Korah," means here, probably, that it was composed for their use, and not *by* them, unless "Heman the Ezrahite" was one of their number. On the phrase, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Psalm iv. The words, "upon Mahalath Leannoth," are of very uncertain signification. They are rendered by the Septuagint and the Vulgate "for Maeleth, to answer;" by Luther, "to sing, of the weakness of the miserable;" by Prof. Alexander, "concerning afflictive sickness." The word *Mahalath* seems here to be a form of מַחֲלֶה, *mahaleh*, which means properly, *sickness, disease*. It is rendered, with a slight variation in the pointing, *disease* in 2 Chron. xxi. 15; Ex. xv. 26; *infirmity*, in Prov. xviii. 14; and *sickness* in Ex. xxiii. 25; 1 Kings viii. 37; 2 Chron. vi. 28. It does not occur elsewhere, and would be properly rendered here, therefore, *disease, sickness*, or *infirmity*. The Hebrew which is rendered *Leannoth*, לְעַנּוֹת, is made up of a preposition (לְ) and a verb. The verb—עָנָה, *Anah*—means (1) to chant or sing; (2) to lift up the voice in any way—to begin to speak; (3) to answer; (4) to mean to say, to imply. The verb also has another class of significations; (*a*) to bestow labour upon, (*b*) to suffer, to be afflicted, and might here refer to such affliction or trouble. According to the former signification, which is probably the true one here, the allusion would be to something which was *said* or sung *in respect to the sickness referred to;* as, for example, a mournful melody composed for the occasion; and the purpose would be to express the feelings experienced in sickness. According to the other signification it would refer to affliction, and would be little more than a repetition of the idea implied in the word *Mahalath*. It seems to me, therefore, that there is a reference in the word "Leannoth" to something which was said or sung on that occasion; or to something which *might* be properly said or sung in reference to sickness. It is difficult to translate the phrase, but it might be somewhat literally rendered, "concerning sickness,—to be said or sung;" that is, in reference to it. The word *Maschil* (see Notes on the title to Psalm xxxii.) conveys the idea that it is a *didactic* or *instructive* psalm,—suggesting appropriate thoughts for such a season. The psalm is ascribed to "Heman the Ezra-

PSALM LXXXVIII.

A Song *or* Psalm [1] for the sons of Korah. To the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, [2] Maschil of Heman *t* the Ezrahite.

O LORD God of my salvation, I *u* have cried day *and* night before thee.

2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;

3 For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

[1] Or, *cf.*

[2] Or, A Psalm *of Heman the Ezrahite, giving instruction.*

t 1 Kings iv. 31. *u* Luke xviii. 7.

hite." The name Heman occurs in 1 Kings iv. 31; 1 Chron. ii. 6; vi. 33; xv. 17, 19; xvi. 42; xxv. 1, 4-6; 2 Chron. v. 12; xxix. 14; xxxv. 15,—usually in connexion with Ethan, as among those whom David placed over the music in the services of the sanctuary.

Nothing is known of the *occasion* on which the psalm was composed, except, as is probably indicated in the title, that it was in a time of sickness; and from the psalm itself we find that it was when the mind was enveloped in impenetrable darkness, with no comfort.

The psalm consists of two parts:—

I. A description of the sick man's suffering, vers. 1-9. His soul was full of troubles, and he drew near to the grave, ver. 3; he was, as it were, already dead, and like those laid in the deep grave, whom God had forgotten, vers. 4-6; the wrath of God lay heavily on him, and all his waves went over him, ver. 7; God had put away all his friends from him, and had left him to suffer alone, ver. 8; his eye mourned by reason of his affliction, and he cried daily to God, ver. 9.

II. His prayer for mercy and deliverance, vers. 10-18. The reasons for the earnestness of the prayer, or the grounds of petition are, (*a*) that the dead could not praise God, or see the wonders of his hand, vers. 10-12; (*b*) that the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God could not be shown in the grave, ver. 11; (*c*) that his troubles were deep and overwhelming, for God had cast off his soul, and had hid his face from him; he had been long afflicted; he was distracted with the terrors of God; the fierce wrath of God went over him; lover and friend and acquaintance had been put far from him, vers. 13-18.

1. O LORD *God of my salvation.* On whom I depend for salvation; who alone canst save me. Luther renders this, "O God, my Saviour." ¶ *I have cried day* and *night before thee.* Literally, "By day I cried; by night before thee;" that is, my prayer is constantly before thee. The meaning is, that there was no intermission to his prayers; he prayed all the while. This does not refer to the general habit of his life, but to the time of his sickness. He had prayed most earnestly and constantly that he might be delivered from sickness and from the dangers of death. He had, as yet, obtained no answer, and he now pours out, and records, a more earnest petition to God.

2. *Let my prayer come before thee.* As if there were something which hindered it, or which had obstructed the way to the throne of grace; as if God repelled it from him, and turned away his ear, and would not hear. ¶ *Incline thine ear unto my cry.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1.

3. *For my soul is full of troubles. I* am full of trouble. The word rendered *is full* means properly *to satiate* as with food; that is, when as much had been taken as could be. So he says here, that this trouble was as great as he could bear; he could sustain no more. He had reached the utmost point of endurance; he had no power to bear any more. ¶ *And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.* Heb., *to Sheol.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 9; Job x. 21, 22. It may mean here either the grave, or the abode of the dead. He was about to die. Unless he found relief he must go down to the abodes of the dead. The Hebrew word rendered *life* is in the plural number, as in Gen. ii. 7; iii. 14, 17; vi. 17; vii. 15; *et al. Why* the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It *may* have been to accord with the fact

4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength;
5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off [1] from thy hand.

[1] Or, *by*.

that man has *two* kinds of life;—the animal life,—or life in common with the inferior creation; and intellectual, or higher life,—the life of the *soul*. Comp. Notes on 1 Thess. v. 23. The meaning here is, that he was about to die; or that his *life* or *lives* approached that state when the grave closes over us; the extinction of the mere animal life; and the separation of the soul—the immortal part—from the body.

4. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* I am so near to death that I may be reckoned already as among the dead. It is so manifest to others that I must die,—that my disease is mortal,—that they already speak of me as dead. The word *pit* here means the grave,—the same as *Sheol* in the previous verse. It means properly (1) a pit, (2) a cistern, Gen. xxxvii. 20, (3) a prison or dungeon, Isa. xxiv. 22, (4) the grave, Ps. xxviii. 1; xxx. 4; Isa. xxxviii. 18. ¶ *I am as a man* that hath *no strength.* Who has no power to resist disease, no vigour of constitution remaining;—who must die.

5. *Free among the dead.* Luther renders this, "I lie forgotten among the dead." De Wette renders it, "Pertaining to the dead,—(den Todten angehörend)—stricken down, like the slain, I lie in the grave," and explains it as meaning, "I am as good as dead." The word rendered *free*—חָפְשִׁי, *hhophshi*—means properly, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), (1) prostrate, weak, feeble; (2) free, as opposed to a slave or a captive; (3) free from public taxes or burdens. The word is translated *free* in Ex. xxi. 2, 5, 26, 27; Deut. xv. 12, 13, 18; 1 Sam. xvii. 25; Job iii. 19; xxxix. 5; Isa. lviii. 6; Jer. xxxiv. 9, 10, 11, 14; and *at liberty* in Jer. xxxiv. 16. It occurs nowhere else except in this verse. In all these places (except in 1 Sam. xvii. 25, where it refers to a *house* or *family* made free, and Job xxxix. 5, where it refers to the freedom of the wild ass), it denotes the freedom of one who had been a servant or slave. In Job iii. 19, it has reference to the grave, and to the fact that the grave delivers a slave or servant from obligation to his master:—"And the servant is *free* from his master." This is the idea, I apprehend, here. It is not, as DeWette supposes, that he was weak and feeble, as the spirits of the departed are represented to be (comp. Notes on Isa. xiv. 9–11), but that the dead are made *free* from the burdens, the toils, the calamities, the *servitudes* of life; that they are like those who are emancipated from bondage (comp. Job vii. 1, 2; xiv. 6); that death comes to discharge them, or to set them at liberty. So the psalmist applies the expression here to himself, as if he had already reached that point; as if it were so certain that he must die that he could speak of it as if it had occurred; as if he were actually in the condition of the dead. The *idea* is that he was to all appearance near the grave, and that there was no hope of his recovery. It is not here, however, the idea of *release* or *emancipation* which was mainly before his mind, or any idea of consolation as from that, but it is the idea of *death*—of hopeless disease that must end in *death.* This he expresses in the usual language; but it is evident that he did not admit any *comfort* into his mind from the idea of *freedom* in the grave. ¶ *Like the slain that lie in the grave.* When slain in battle. They are *free* from the perils and the toils of life; they are emancipated from its cares and dangers. Death *is* freedom; and it is *possible* to derive solace from that idea of death, as Job did (ch. iii. 19);—but the psalmist

6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

7 Thy wrath [v] lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.

8 Thou [w] hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination

v Ps. xxxviii. 2. w Job xix. 13, etc.

here, as remarked above, did *not* so admit that idea into his mind as to be comforted by it. ¶ *Whom thou remembrest no more.* As if they were forgotten by thee; as if they were no longer the object of thy care. They are suffered to lie and waste away, with no care on thy part to restore them to life, or to preserve them from offensiveness and decay. So the great, the beautiful, and the good lie neglected in the grave. ¶ *And they are cut off from thy hand.* Marg., *by.* The Hebrew is literally "*from* thy hand," but still the idea is that it was by the agency of God. They had been cut down, and were forgotten,—as if God regarded them no more. So we shall all moulder in the grave—in that deep, dark, cold, silent, repulsive abode, *as if* even God had forgotten us.

6. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit.* That is, I am as if I were thus laid; the deep grave seems now to lie so certainly before me, that it may be spoken of as if it were already my abode. The words rendered *lowest pit* mean literally *the pit under*, or *beneath.* The reference is to the sepulchre, as in ver. 4. ¶ *In darkness.* The dark grave; the realms of the dead. See Notes on Job x. 21, 22. ¶ *In the deeps.* The caverns; the deep places of the earth or the sea. All these expressions are designed to convey the idea that he was near the grave; that there was no hope for him; that he must die. Perhaps also there is connected with this the idea of trouble, of anguish, of sorrow;—of that mental darkness of which the grave was an image, and into which he was plunged by the prospect of death. The whole scene was a sad one, and he was overwhelmed with grief, and saw only the prospect of continued sorrow and gloom. Even a good man *may* be made afraid—*may* have his mind made sad and sorrowful—by the prospect of dying. See Isa. xxxviii. Death is naturally gloomy; and when the light of religion does not shine upon the soul, and its comforts do not fill the heart, it is but natural that the mind *should be* full of gloom.

7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.* Presses me down; burdens me. The meaning is, that that which was the proper and usual expression of wrath or displeasure—to wit, bodily and mental suffering—pressed hard on him, and crushed him to the earth. These bodily sufferings he interpreted, in the sad and gloomy state of mind in which he was, as evidences of the Divine displeasure against himself. ¶ *And thou hast afflicted* me. Thou hast oppressed me, or broken me down. ¶ *With all thy waves.* Literally, "*thy breakers;*" that is, with expressions of wrath like the waves of the sea, which foam and break on the shore. Nothing could be a more striking image of wrath. Those "breakers" *seem* to be so furious and angry, they rush along with so much impetuosity, they are so mighty, they dash with such fury on the shore, that it seems as if nothing could stand before them. Yet they find a barrier such as we should little expect. The low and humble beach made of shifting sand, where there *seems* to be no stability, is an effectual barrier against all their rage;—as the humble piety of the child of God, apparently without strength to resist calamity, bears all the beatings of affliction, and maintains its place as the heavy waves of sorrow roll upon it. On the meaning of the word used here, and on the idea expressed, see Notes on Ps. xlii. 7.

8. *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.* The same

unto them: *I am* [x] shut up, and I cannot come forth.

9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

10 Wilt [y] thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.

11 Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?

x Job xii. 14. *y* Isa. xxxviii. 18.

ground of complaint, or expression of the depth of affliction, occurs elsewhere, Ps. xxxi. 11; xxxviii. 11; lxix. 8. See also Job xix. 13–17. ¶ *Thou hast made me an abomination unto them.* As something which they would avoid, or from which they would revolt and turn away—as we turn away from the body of a dead man, or from an offensive object. The word means properly an object to be detested or abominated, as things unclean, Gen. xliii. 32; or as idolatry, 1 Kings xiv. 24; 2 Kings xvi. 3; xxiii. 13. ¶ I am *shut up.* As in prison; to wit, by disease, as when one is confined to his house. ¶ *And I cannot come forth.* I cannot leave my couch, my room, my house. Comp. Job xii. 14.

9. *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.* I weep; my eye pours out tears. Literally, My eye pines away, or decays. Comp. Notes on Job xvi. 20; Isa. xxxviii. 3; Ps. vi. 6. ¶ LORD, *I have called daily upon thee.* That is, I have prayed earnestly and long, but I have received no answer. ¶ *I have stretched out my hands unto thee.* I have *spread out* my hands in the attitude of prayer. The idea is that of earnest supplication.

10. *Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?* The wonders—or the things fitted to excite admiration—which the living behold. Shall the dead see those things which here tend to excite reverence for thee, and which lead men to worship thee? The idea is that the dead will be cut off from all the privileges which attend the living on earth; or, that those in the grave cannot contemplate the character and the greatness of God. He urges this as a reason why he should be rescued. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Ps. vi. 5. See Notes on that passage. Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 18. ¶ *Shall the dead arise* and *praise thee?* The original word, here rendered *the dead,* is *Rephaim*—רְפָאִים. On its meaning, see Notes on Isa. xiv. 9. It means, properly, *relaxed, languid, feeble, weak;* and is then applied to the dead—the *shades*—the *Manes*—dwelling in the under-world in Sheol, or Hades, and supposed to be as shades or shadows, weak and feeble. The question here is not whether they would rise to live again, or appear in this world, but whether *in* Sheol they would rise up from their resting-places, and praise God as men in vigour and in health can on the earth. The question has no reference to the future resurrection. It relates to the supposed dark, dismal, gloomy, inactive state of the dead.

11. *Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave?* Thy goodness; thy mercy. Shall any one make it known there? shall it there be celebrated? ¶ Or *thy faithfulness in destruction?* In the place where destruction seems to reign; where human hopes perish; where the body moulders back to dust. Shall any one there dwell on the fidelity—the truthfulness—of God, in such a way as to honour him? It is *implied* here that, according to the views *then* entertained of the state of the dead, those things would not occur. According to what is *now* made known to us of the unseen world it *is true* that the mercy of God will not be made known to the dead; that the Gospel will *not* be preached to them; that no messenger from God will convey to them the offers of salvation. Comp. Luke xvi. 28–31.

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* [z]

[z] Job vi. 4.

12. *Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?* In the dark world; in "the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light is as darkness." Job x. 21, 22. ¶ *And thy righteousness.* The justice of thy character; or, the ways in which thou dost maintain and manifest thy righteous character. ¶ *In the land of forgetfulness.* Of oblivion; where the memory has decayed, and where the remembrance of former things is blotted out. This is a part of the general description, illustrating the ideas then entertained of the state of the dead;—that they would be weak and feeble; that they could see nothing; that even the memory would fail, and the recollection of former things pass from the mind. All these are images of the grave as it *appears* to man when he has not the clear and full light of revelation;—and the grave *is* all this—a dark and cheerless abode—an abode of fearfulness and gloom—when the light of the great truths of the Gospel is not suffered to fall upon it. That the psalmist dreaded this is clear, for he had not yet the full light of revealed truth in regard to the grave, and it seemed to him to be a gloomy abode. That men without the Gospel *ought* to dread it, is clear; for when the grave is not illuminated with Christian truth and hope, it *is* a place from which man by nature shrinks back, and it is not wonderful that a wicked man dreads to die.

13. *But unto thee have I cried, O* LORD. I have earnestly prayed; I have sought thy gracious interposition. ¶ *And in the morning.* That is, each morning; every day. My first business in the morning shall be prayer. ¶ *Shall my prayer prevent thee.* Anticipate thee; go before thee:—that is, it shall be early;—so to speak even before thou dost awake to the employments of the day. The language is that which would be applicable to a case where one made an appeal to another for aid before he had arisen from his bed, or who came to him even while he was asleep—and who thus, with an earnest petition, anticipated his rising. Comp. Notes on Job iii. 12; comp. Ps. xxi. 3; lix. 10; lxxix. 8; cxix. 148; Matt. xvii. 25; 1 Thess. iv. 15.

14. LORD, *why castest thou off my soul?* Why dost thou forsake or abandon me? Why is it that thou dost not interpose, since thou hast all power, and since thou art a God of mercy? Why dost thou not deliver me from my troubles? How often are good men constrained to ask this question! How often does this language express exactly what is passing in their minds! How difficult, too, it is to answer the question, and to see *why* that God who has all power, and who is infinitely benevolent, does *not* interpose to deliver his people in affliction! The answer to this question cannot be fully given in this world; there will be an answer furnished doubtless in the future life. ¶ Why *hidest thou thy face from me?* Why dost thou not lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and show me thy favour? God seemed to turn away from him. He seemed unwilling even to *look* upon the sufferer. He permitted him to bear his sorrows, unpitied and alone.

15. *I* am *afflicted and ready to die.* I am so afflicted—so crushed with

I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

16 Thy fierce wrath [a] goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They came round about me [1] daily like water; they compassed me about together.

18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

a Rev. vi. 17. [1] Or, *all the day.*

sorrow and trouble—that my strength is nearly gone, and I can endure it but a little longer. ¶ *From* my *youth up.* That is, for a long time;—so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the psalm had been a man always afflicted; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood. ¶ While *I suffer thy terrors.* I bear those things which produce terror; or, which fill my mind with alarm; to wit, the fear of death, and the dread of the future world. ¶ *I am distracted.* I cannot compose and control my mind; I cannot pursue any settled course of thought; I cannot confine my attention to any one subject; I cannot reason calmly on the subject of affliction, on the Divine government, on the ways of God. I am distracted with contending feelings,—with my pain, and my doubts, and my fears,—and I cannot think clearly of anything. Such is *often* the case in sickness; and consequently what we need, to prepare us for sickness, is a strong faith, built on a solid foundation while we are in health; such an intelligent and firm faith that when the hour of sickness shall come we shall have nothing else to do *but* to believe, and to take the comfort of believing. The bed of sickness is not the proper place to examine the evidences of religion; it is not the place to make preparation for death; not the proper place to *become* religious. Religion demands the best vigour of the intellect and the calmest state of the heart; and this great subject should be SETTLED in our minds *before we are sick—before we are laid on the bed of death.*

16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.* Like waters. See ver. 7. ¶ *Thy terrors have cut me off.* That is, I am as one already dead; I am so near to death that I may be spoken of *as* dead.

17. *They came round about me daily like water.* Marg., as in Heb., *all the day.* That is, his troubles seemed to be like the waves of the sea constantly breaking on the shore. See Ps. xlii. 7. ¶ *They compassed me about together.* My troubles did not come singly, so that I could meet them one at a time, but they seemed to have banded themselves together; they all came upon me at once.

18. *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me.* That is, Thou hast so afflicted me that they have forsaken me. Those who professed to love me, and whom I loved,—those whom I regarded as my friends, and who seemed *to be* my friends,—are now wholly turned away from me, and I am left to suffer alone. See Notes on ver. 8. ¶ And *mine acquaintance into darkness.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "my acquaintance *from my misery.*" Luther, "Thou hast caused my friends and neighbours, and my kindred, to separate themselves far from me, *on account of such misery.*" The literal rendering would be, *my acquaintances are darkness.* This may mean either that they had so turned away that he could not see them, *as if* they were in the dark; or, that his familiars now—his companions—were dark and dismal objects,—gloomy thoughts,—sad forebodings. *Perhaps* the whole

might be translated, "Far away from me hast thou put lover and friend,—my acquaintances!—all is darkness!" That is, When I think of any of them, all is darkness, sadness. My friends are not to be seen. They have vanished. I see no friends; I see only darkness and gloom. All have gone, leaving me alone in this condition of unpitied sorrow! This completes the picture of the suffering man; a man to whom all was dark, and who could find no consolation anywhere—in God; in his friends; in the grave; in the prospect of the future. There *are* such cases; and it was well that there was one such description in the sacred Scriptures of a good man thus suffering,—to show us that when *we* thus feel, it should not be regarded as proof that we have no piety. *Beneath* all this, there may be true love to God; *beyond* all this, there may be a bright world to which the sufferer will come, and where he will for ever dwell.

PSALM LXXXIX.

This psalm is entitled "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite." In the margin this is rendered, "A Psalm for Ethan the Ezrahite to give instruction." On the word *Maschil*, see Notes on the title to Psalm xlii. As both Heman (Ps. lxxxviii. *title*) and Ethan, in the title before us, are mentioned as *Ezrahites*, it would seem that they were of the same family, and were probably brethren. Ethan and Heman, in connexion with Zimri, and Calcol, and Dara, five of them in all, are mentioned as "the sons of Zerah,"—grandsons of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 6. If these were the persons referred to, and if they were the authors of these two psalms, then the period of the composition of these psalms was laid far back in the history of the Hebrew people, far anterior to the time of David. Comp. 1 Chron. ii. 6-12. It is hardly probable, however, that they were composed at so early a period in the Jewish history; and there are some things in *this* psalm, which cannot be reconciled with such a supposition (comp. vers. 3, 20, 35, 39, 49), and which make it certain that it was either composed by David, or after the time of David. The probability, therefore, seems to be that these names, "Heman" and "Ethan," were either the names of some persons subsequent to the time referred to in 1 Chron. ii. 6, (see General Introd., § 2 [5]); or that these their names were given to classes of "the sons of Korah" who had charge of the music, and that the psalms were composed by some persons of those classes. As thus composed, they might be spoken of as the psalms of Heman and Ethan.

There are no certain methods of ascertaining *when* the psalm before us was composed, or what was the *occasion* of its composition. De Wette supposes that it must have been written *about* the time of the exile, as the family of David is represented in the psalm as dishonoured and dethroned,—and yet *before* the exile, as there is no mention of the destruction of the city and temple. He accords, therefore, with the opinion of Venema that it was not far from the time of the death of Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-24. The author he supposes to be either a successor of David,—an humbled monarch,—or, some one who personates the king, and who represents the calamity of the king as his own. Hengstenberg also supposes that it was composed between the time of the death of Josiah and the Babylonish exile. There is a strong probability in the psalm itself that it was composed at such a period, but it is impossible to determine the exact time, or the precise occasion. The *burden* of the psalm is, that most precious promises had been made to David of the perpetuity of his throne, but that now these promises *seemed* to fail; that reverses and calamities had come which threatened to overturn his throne, and to bring his kingdom to an end. His "crown" had been "profaned" and "cast to the ground." See vers. 38-44.

The psalm consists properly of three parts:—

I. The promise made to David in respect to the perpetuity of his throne, vers. 1-37. The illustration of this occupies a considerable part of the psalm.

II. The fact that this promise *seemed* to be disregarded; that the "covenant" had been "made void;" that the "crown" had been "profaned," and "cast to the ground," vers. 38-45.

III. An earnest plea for the Divine interposition in the fulfilment of the promise, and the restoration of the Divine favour and mercy, vers. 46-52.

PSALM LXXXIX.

[1] Maschil of Ethan [b] the Ezrahite.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy

[1] Or, A Psalm *for Ethan the Ezrahite to give instruction.*
[b] 1 Chron. ii. 6.

faithfulness to [2] all generations.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with

[2] *generation and generation*; so ver. 4; Ps. cxix. 90.

1. *I will sing of the mercies of the* LORD *for ever.* Particularly how the "mercy" was manifested in the *promise* made to David; the solemn covenant made with him in respect to the perpetuity of his throne. The appointment of David to the throne was an act of mere mercy or favour, since he was not in the royal line, and had no claim to the crown. It will be seen, also, that if it be supposed that the covenant with David, and the promise therein made to him, was intended to include the Messiah as descending from him, there was a still higher reason for celebrating the "*mercies*" of God, inasmuch as all mercy to our world comes through him. ¶ *With my mouth.* Not merely in my heart, but with words. The meaning here is that he would make a record which might be used evermore as the language of praise. ¶ *Will I make known thy faithfulness.* In the fulfilment of these promises. He felt assured that they would be fulfilled. Whatever appearances there might be to the contrary, the psalmist had no doubt that God would prove himself to be faithful and true. See Notes on Isa. lv. 3, on the expression, "the sure mercies of David." ¶ *To all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *generation and generation.* He would make a record which would carry down the remembrance of this faithfulness to all future ages.

2. *For I have said.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Thou hast said," which is more in accordance with what the connexion seems to demand; but the Hebrew will not admit of this construction. The true meaning seems to be, that the *psalmist* had said; that is, he had said in his *mind;* he had firmly believed; he had so received it as a truth that it might be spoken of as firmly settled, or as an indisputable reality. It was in his mind one of the things whose truthfulness did not admit of a doubt. ¶ *Mercy shall be built up for ever.* The mercy referred to; the mercy manifested in the promise made to David. The idea is, that the promise would be fully carried out or verified. It would not be like the foundation of a building, which, after being laid, was abandoned; it would be as if the building, for which the foundation was designed, were carried up and completed. It would not be a forsaken, half-finished edifice, but an edifice fully erected. ¶ *Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish.* In the matter referred to—the promise made to David. ¶ *In the very heavens.* Literally, "The heavens—thou wilt establish thy faithfulness in them." That is, the heavens—the heavenly bodies—so regular, so fixed, so enduring, are looked upon as the emblem of stability. The psalmist brings them thus before his mind, and he says that God had, as it were, made his promise a part of the very heavens; he had given to his faithfulness a place among the most secure, and fixed, and settled objects in nature. The sun in its regular rising; the stars in their certain course; the constellations, the same from age to age, were an emblem of the stability and security of the promises of God. Comp. Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.

3. *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* With my chosen one; that is, with David. The original is in

my chosen, I have sworn [c] unto David my servant.

4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

5 And the heavens [d] shall praise thy wonders, O LORD; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

[c] 2 Sam. vii. 11, etc.

[d] Ps. xix. 1.

the singular number, though by the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, and by Luther, it is rendered in the plural —chosen ones—elect. This is undoubtedly the language of God himself, though it is not expressly ascribed to him. The design is to describe the solemn promise which God had made to David and to his posterity. Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71. See also, on the use of the phrase "*made a covenant*," Notes on Ps. l. 5; lxxxiii. 5. ¶ *I have sworn unto David my servant.* I have taken a solemn oath in regard to him. The substance of the oath is stated in the next verse. The promise referred to is found in 2 Sam. vii. 11–16.

4. *Thy seed will I establish for ever.* Thy children; thy posterity. The reference is to his successors on the throne. The promise was that there should not fail to be one on his throne; that is, that his dynasty should never become extinct. See 2 Sam. vii. 16: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." Comp. also 1 Kings ii. 4. The word rendered *establish* means properly *to fit;* then, to make firm; to put on a solid basis. ¶ *And build up thy throne.* It shall be kept up; it shall be like a building that is constantly progressing towards completion. The meaning is, that it would not fail. He would not begin the work, and then abandon it. The dynasty, the kingdom, the throne, would be complete and perpetual. ¶ *To all generations.* As long as the world should stand. This can have been accomplished only by the Messiah occupying in a spiritual sense the throne of "his father David." Comp. Luke i. 32, 33.

5. *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O* LORD. That is, the inhabitants of heaven shall find new occasion for praise in the faithfulness evinced in carrying out the promise to David, and in the marvellous things which will occur under that promise, and in its accomplishment. If we suppose that this promise embraced the Messiah and his reign, then we shall see what new occasions the angels would find for praise,—in the incarnation of the Redeemer, and in all that would be accomplished by him. ¶ *Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.* In the assembly of the holy ones; that is, the angels. In their songs of praise, this will be among the things which will fill them with joy. The *idea* is, that the inhabitants of the heavens —the holy angels—would take a deep interest in the fulfilment of this promise, as it would furnish new manifestations of the character of God. Comp. Rev. v. 11–14; 1 Pet. i. 12.

6. *For who in the heaven,* etc. Literally, In the cloud; that is, in the sky. The idea is that none in the regions above—the upper world —can be compared with God. There is no other god,—there is no one among the angels, great and glorious as they are, that can be likened to him. ¶ *Who among the sons of the mighty,* etc. The angels—regarded as mighty. The "sons of the mighty" on earth are spoken of as mighty men,—as men of power,—as men of exalted rank. So here, the idea is, that none of the angels, though of exalted rank ("principalities," or "powers," comp. Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21), could be put in comparison with God. See Notes on Isa. xl. 25.

7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.

8 O LORD God of hosts, who *e is* a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9 Thou *f* rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

e 1 Sam. ii. 2. *f* Job xxxviii. 11; Mar. iv. 39, 41.

7. *God is greatly to be feared.* There is that in him which is fitted to fill the mind with solemn feelings, and this is a proper state of mind with which to come before him. Nature teaches us that God should be approached with awe; and all the teachings of revelation confirm this. His power is to be feared; his justice is to be feared; his holiness is to be feared; and there is much also in his goodness, his benevolence, his mercy, to fill the mind with solemn emotions. ¶ *In the assembly of the saints.* The assembly of the holy; the assembly that is convened for his worship. The reference here may be either to worshippers on earth or in heaven. *Wherever*, and *whenever*, in this world or in other worlds, creatures are engaged in the worship of God, there should be deep solemnity and reverence. On the word rendered *assembly* here—סוֹד, *sodh*—a council, or assemblage for counsel, see Notes on Ps. xxv. 14; lxiv. 2; comp. Job xv. 8. The *idea* here is founded on what is said in the previous verse, that none can be compared with God. ¶ *And to be had in reverence.* In fear; in awe. ¶ *Of all* them that are *about him.* That approach him; that are in his presence. The conscious presence of God should fill the mind with awe. When we feel that his eye is upon us, when we know that he sees us, how *can* we trifle and be thoughtless? How *can* we then be sinful?

8. *O* LORD *God of hosts.* See Notes on Isa. i. 9; Ps. xxiv. 10. God, commanding the armies of heaven; leading forth the stars; controlling all forces—all powers. ¶ *Who* is *a strong* LORD *like unto thee?* The original word here rendered *Lord* is יָהּ, *Yah*, or *Jah.* This is one of the few places where that word occurs, except in the compounding of words. It is an abbreviation of the name *Jehovah*, and has the same signification. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 4. The meaning is, that there was no one who in respect to *power* could be compared with Jehovah. ¶ *Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?* Rather, "thy faithfulness is round about thee." That is, It attends thee at all times; it is always with thee; it is a part of thy very nature. To all round about thee, thou art faithful; wherever God is—and he is everywhere—there is faithfulness. He never changes; and men and angels may always trust in him. The psalmist then proceeds to illustrate the greatness of his power, and of his faithfulness, in the works of creation. The *design* of these illustrations, doubtless, is to keep before the mind the idea of the Divine *faithfulness* as shown in the works of nature, and then to apply this to the covenant which had been made with David. The idea is, that he who is so faithful in nature will be the same in grace; that he who had shown such unchangeableness in the works of creation might be expected to show the like in respect to the promises which he had made.

9. *Thou rulest the raging of the sea.* The pride; the anger; the lifting up of the sea. That is, when the sea is raging and boisterous; when it seems as if everything would be swept away before it, thou hast absolute control over it. There is, perhaps, no more impressive exhibition of Divine *power* than the control which God has over the raging waves of the ocean:—and yet this was the power which Jesus exercised over the raging sea of Galilee,—showing that he had the power of God. Mark iv. 39–41. ¶ *When the waves thereof*

10 Thou hast broken [1] Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with [2] thy strong arm.

11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12 The north and the south, thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon [h] shall rejoice in thy name.

[1] Or, *Egypt.* [2] *the arm of thy strength.*

[g] Judges iv. 6, 12. [h] Josh. xii. 1.

arise. In the lifting up of the waves; when they seem to raise themselves up in defiance. ¶ *Thou stillest them.* At thy pleasure. They rise no higher than thou dost permit; at thy command they settle down into a calm. So in the troubles of life—the storms—the waves of affliction; they rise as high as God permits, and no higher; when he commands they subside, and leave the mind as calm as the smooth sea when not a breath of wind moves over its surface, or makes a ripple on its placid bosom.

10. *Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces.* Marg., *Egypt.* See Notes on Ps. lxxxvii. 4. The reference is to the exodus of the Hebrew people, when he destroyed the power of Egypt. ¶ *As one that is slain.* Slain on the field of battle; as a man pierced through with a sword or spear. ¶ *Thou hast scattered thine enemies.* At the time referred to, in Egypt; and at other times, when the enemies of God and of his people had been discomfited. ¶ *With thy strong arm.* Marg., as in Heb., *the arm of thy strength.* That is, by his power,—the arm being the symbol of power. See Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 15. Comp. Deut. v. 15; vii. 8, 19, *et al.*

11. *The heavens* are *thine.* Are thy work; and, therefore, thy property,—the highest conception of *property* being that which is derived from creation. It is also implied here that as all things belong to God, he has a right to dispose of them as he pleases. ¶ *The earth also* is *thine.* The earth itself, as made by thee; all that the earth produces, as having sprung out of that which thou hast made. The entire proprietorship is in thee. ¶ As for *the world.* In the use of this word, the earth is spoken of as *inhabitable,* meaning that the earth and all that dwell upon it belong to God. ¶ *And the fulness thereof.* All that it produces; what constitutes its *entireness.* That is, the earth itself considered *as* earth, or as a mass of matter; and all that springs from it;—all that constitutes *the earth,* with all its mountains, seas, rivers, men, animals, minerals, harvests, cities, towns, monuments—the productions of nature, the works of power, and the achievements of art. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxiv. 1. ¶ *Thou hast founded them.* They all have their foundation in thee; that is, thou hast caused them all to exist. They have no independent and separate basis on which to rest.

12. *The north and the south, thou hast created them.* All that there is in the north and in the south—in the northern and the southern sky—the constellations and the stars; and all that there is in the earth—in the regions of cold and of heat—far as they extend in either direction. The word rendered *north* here — צָפוֹן, *tzaphon* — means properly that which is hidden or dark, and was applied to the north, because the ancients regarded it as the seat of gloom and darkness. Hom. Od., ix. 25. The south, on the other hand, was regarded by them as illuminated and made bright by the beams of the sun. The word rendered *south* — יָמִין, *yamin* — means literally *the right hand,* and was applied to the south because the ancient geographers were supposed to face the east, as now they are supposed to face the north. Comp. Notes on Job xxiii. 9. ¶ *Tabor and Hermon.* That is, the west and the east,—the former of these mountains being on the western side of Palestine, the

13 Thou [1] hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.

14 Justice [i] and judgment *are* the [2] habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: [k] they shall walk, O LORD, in the light [l] of thy countenance.

[1] *an arm with might.*
[i] Ps. xcvii. 2.
[2] Or, *establishment*, Isa. xvi. 5.
[k] Lev. xxv. 9; Ps. xcviii. 6; Rom. x. 18.
[l] Num. vi. 26.

other on the eastern, and both of them being objects of beauty and grandeur. The idea is, that God had control of all parts of the universe; that the world in every direction, and in every part, declared his power, and made known his greatness. ¶ *Shall rejoice in thy name.* Or, *do* rejoice in thee. That is, They, as it were, exult in thee as their God. They are clothed with beauty, as if full of joy; and they acknowledge that all this comes from thee as the great Creator. Comp. Ps. lxv. 8, 12; xcvi. 11, 12.

13. *Thou hast a mighty arm.* Marg., as in Heb., *an arm with might.* That is, Thou hast great power,—the arm being the instrument by which we accomplish our purposes. ¶ *Strong is thy hand.* The hand, too, is an instrument by which we execute our plans. Hence God is so often represented as having delivered his people with a strong hand. ¶ And *high is thy right hand.* It is by the *right* hand particularly that we carry out our purposes. We lift it high when we are about to strike with force. All this is expressive of the Divine omnipotence.

14. *Justice and judgment* are *the habitation of thy throne.* Marg., *establishment.* The Hebrew word—מָכוֹן, *machon*—means properly a place where one stands; then, a foundation or basis. The idea here is, that the throne of God is founded on justice and right judgment; it is this which *supports* it; his administration is maintained *because* it is right. This supposes that there is such a thing as right or justice in itself considered, or in the nature of things, and independently of the will of God; that the Divine administration will be conformed to that, and will be firm *because* it is thus conformed to it. Even omnipotent power could not maintain permanently a throne founded on injustice and wrong. Such an administration would sooner or later make its own destruction sure. ¶ *Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.* Literally, *anticipate* thy face; that is, thy goings. Wherever thou dost go, wherever thou dost manifest thyself, there will be mercy and faithfulness. Thy march through the world will be attended with kindness and fidelity. So certain is this, that his coming will, as it were, be *anticipated* by truth and goodness.

15. *Blessed* is *the people.* Happy is their condition. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. ¶ *That know the joyful sound.* That hear that sound. De Wette explains this of the call to the festivals and offerings, Lev. xxiii. 24; Num. x. 10; Ps. xxvii. 6. That is, says he, those who honour and worship God. The Hebrew word—תְּרוּעָה, *teruah*—means a loud noise; a tumult; especially, shouts of joy, or rejoicing, Job viii. 21; 1 Sam. iv. 5; the "shout of a king," that is, the joyful acclamations with which a king is welcomed, Num. xxiii. 21; the shout of battle, Jer. iv. 19; xlix. 2. Then it means the sound or clangour of trumpets, Lev. xxv. 9; Num. xxix. 1–6. The word is, therefore, especially applicable to the sounding of the trumpets which attended the celebration of the great festivals among the Hebrews, and there can be little doubt that this is the reference here. The idea is, that they are blessed or happy who are the worshippers of Jehovah, the true God; who are summoned to his

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness [m] shall they be exalted.

17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength; and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.[n]

[m] 1 Cor. i. 30.

[1] Or, *our shield* is *of the LORD, and our king* is *of the Holy One of Israel*, Ps. xlvii. 9.

18 For [1] the LORD *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty; [o] I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

[n] 1 Sam. ii. 1. [o] Isa. ix. 6.

service; who are convened to the place of his worship. ¶ *They shall walk, O* LORD, *in the light of thy countenance.* They shall live in thy favour, and enjoy thy smiles.

16. *In thy name shall they rejoice.* In *thee* shall they rejoice, or find their happiness. In thy being; thy perfections; thy protection; thy government; thy favour. ¶ *All the day.* That is, continually. It is their privilege, and it is their duty to rejoice always. Thou art always the same, and the happiness which is found in thy being and attributes at one time may be found at all times; thy promises are ever the same, and thy people may find happiness in them always. There is no reason why the people of God should not be constantly happy; they who have such a God, and such hopes as they are permitted to cherish, *should be* so. Comp. Notes on Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4. ¶ *And in thy righteousness.* Under thy righteous government; or, in the knowledge of thy righteous character. ¶ *Shall they be exalted.* See Prov. xiv. 34. The effect of that knowledge shall be to exalt or to elevate them in moral character, in happiness, in the esteem of others, and in true prosperity. Comp. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

17. *For thou* art *the glory of their strength.* The ornament; the beauty; the honour; that is, Their strength derives its beauty and honour, not from anything in themselves, but from the fact that it is derived from thee. The strength thus imparted is an honour or ornament in itself; it is an honour and glory to them that it is imparted to them. ¶ *And in thy favour.* Or, *by* thy favour, or good pleasure. ¶ *Our horn shall be exalted.* The horn is a symbol of power. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 21; lxxv. 4; Dan. vii. 8; Job xvi. 15. The meaning here is, that their power had been derived from God; or that all which contributed to their exaltation and honour in the world, had been derived from him.

18. *For the* LORD is *our defence.* Marg., *Our shield is of the Lord.* The original word rendered *defence,* is *shield.* Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 12; xxxiii. 20; lix. 11. The meaning is, that protection was to be found in God alone. The true construction of this verse is, "For to Jehovah [belongs] our shield, and to the Holy One of Israel our king." That is, All that they had, and all that they relied on as a defence, belonged to God, or was of God; in other words, their very protectors were themselves protected by Jehovah. They had no other defence; nothing else on which they could depend.

19. *Then thou spakest in vision.* Or, by a vision. See this word explained in the Notes on Isa. i. 1. The meaning is, that God had spoken this by means of *visions,* or by communications made to his people by the prophets. This "vision" was especially made known to Nathan, and through him to David. See 2 Sam. vii. 4—17. The substance of what is here said is found in that passage in Samuel. In 2 Sam. vii. 17, it is expressly called a "vision." ¶ *To thy holy one.* The vision was addressed particularly to David, but was made through him to the people of Israel. The ancient versions render this in the plural, as referring to the people of Israel. The

20 I [p] have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

21 With [q] whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

[p] 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12. [q] 2 Sam. vii. 8—16.

Hebrew is in the singular number. ¶ *I have laid help upon* one that is *mighty.* I have so endowed him that he shall be the protector and defender of my people. He is qualified for the office entrusted to him, and in his hands the interests of the nation will be safe. This was not expressly said in the vision; but this was the substance of what was said. See 2 Sam. vii. 9. ¶ *I have exalted* one *chosen out of the people.* One not of exalted rank; one not descended from kings and conquerors; but one that had grown up among the people; one called from the ranks of common life; one chosen from among those engaged in humble occupations. In this way it was the *more* apparent that the power really came from God. Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 8; see also Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 70–72.

20. *I have found David my servant.* That is, I found him among the sheepfolds; in humble life. I saw there one who was qualified for the high office of being the ruler of the nation, and I designated, or set him apart, for that office. The idea is, that there was in him a *previous* qualification for this work, and that God had seen this, and, in accordance with this, had summoned him to his service. ¶ *With my holy oil have I anointed him.* By the hand of Samuel. 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Oil was used in setting apart prophets, priests, and kings. It was *poured* upon the person,—emblematic of the *pouring out* upon him of wisdom and grace from on high to qualify him for his office.

21. *With whom my hand shall be established.* Septuagint; "My hand shall aid him." Luther; "My hand shall hold him." De Wette; "With him my hand shall be continually." Professor Alexander; "Shall ever be present." The idea is, that God would always defend or protect him. He would not merely interpose *at times,* or *at intervals,* but he would be his *constant* protector. His hand would be permanently, or constantly, extended for his aid—as if it were a part of David's own person, or were his own hand, to be used as he pleased. So God is the *constant* helper of his people. They may rely on his power; they may avail themselves of it, *as if* it were their own. ¶ *Mine arm also shall strengthen him.* In using his own arm, he will in fact make use of the strength of mine. The people of God are as really defended *as if* the strength of God were theirs; or as if they were themselves almighty. The omnipotence of God is employed in their defence, and it will be as certainly exerted in their favour, and as constantly, *as if* it were their own. It will be no less *surely* employed in their defence in the hand of God than if it were in their own hand. It will be more *wisely* employed by him in their behalf than it would be by themselves.

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him.* The literal meaning here is derived from the force sometimes used in extorting or *demanding* a debt, where no indulgence is shown, but where it is *exacted* to the last mite, whether the man is able to pay it or not. Comp. Matt. xviii. 25, 28. Then it is used to denote oppression, or subjugation, which is the idea here. The enemy shall not be suffered to act the part of one who rigidly exacts the payment of a debt; that is, he shall not be allowed to oppress him. ¶ *Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.* This is copied almost literally from 2 Sam. vii. 10. The phrase "the son of wickedness" means simply *the wicked.* He shall not fall into the hands, or under the power of wicked men.

23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

25 I will set his hand also in the [r] sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

27 Also I will make him *my* [s] first-born, higher [t] than the kings of the earth.

28 My mercy [u] will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant [v] shall stand fast with him.

r Ps. lxxii. 8. *s* Col. i. 15.

t Rev. xix. 16. *u* Isa. lv. 3. *v* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

23. *And I will beat down his foes before his face.* I will crush them, or destroy them:—showing that the power of doing this was not his own, but was the power of God exerted in his behalf. ¶ *And plague them that hate him.* His enemies. I will bring "plagues" upon them:—calamities, judgments, afflictions. The word is commonly used to denote those judgments which come directly from the hand of God,—as famine, pestilence, wasting sickness, the plague, or the "plagues" of Egypt. Ex. xii. 13; xxx. 12; Num. viii. 19; xvii. 11, 12. These are all in the hand of God, and can be employed at his pleasure, as storms and tempests may be, in executing his purposes.

24. *But my faithfulness and my mercy* shall be *with him.* I will at the same time be faithful to him, and merciful. These attributes of my nature shall be always attendant on him, *as if* they were his own. ¶ *And in my name.* By me;—or—He, acting in my name, and in my cause, shall be exalted. ¶ *Shall his horn be exalted.* See Notes on ver. 17.

25. *I will set his hand also in the sea,* etc. His dominion shall extend from the sea on the one hand to the rivers on the other. The *sea* here evidently refers to the Mediterranean; and the *rivers* to the great rivers on the east—the Tigris and Euphrates. These were the promised boundaries of the land. Gen. xv. 18. David secured a conquest over all these territories, and united all under his sceptre, thus securing the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham. See Notes on Ps. lx.

26. *He shall cry unto me, Thou* art *my Father.* He shall appeal to me, or come to me as a Father, and as his only hope and defence. ¶ *My God.* He shall come to me *as* God, and shall recognise me as *his* God, his only trust and hope. ¶ *And the rock of my salvation.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. The meaning of all this is, that he would at all times recognise him as his only trust and hope, and that he would be faithful on his part to God.

27. *Also I will make him* my *first-born.* He shall be regarded and treated by me as the first-born son is in a family; that is, with distinguished favour and honour. Compare Gen. xxvii. 19; xxix. 26; Ex. iv. 22; xiii. 12; Jer. xxxi. 9. See also Notes on Col. i. 15, 18. ¶ *Higher than the kings of the earth.* Than other kings; the most exalted among kings and rulers. This was entirely fulfilled in David, who occupied a pre-eminence among princes and rulers which no other king did:—a prominence alike in his own personal character and his reign; in his relation to God; and in the fact that he was the ancestor of the Messiah, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. xix. 16); "the prince of the kings of the earth," Rev. i. 5.

28. *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.* I will not withdraw my favour from him, nor from his posterity, vers. 33–36. In him, and in his Great Descendant, the throne

29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.[w]

30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

31 If they [1] break my statutes,

[w] Jer. xxxiii. 17—21. [1] *profane.*

and keep not my commandments;

32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

33 Nevertheless [x] my loving-kindness [2] will I not utterly take

[x] 1 Kings xi. 36. [2] *I will not make void from.*

shall be established for ever. This dominion will not be like the changing dynasties of this world, but will be perpetual and eternal. ¶ *And my covenant shall stand fast with him.* See 2 Sam. vii. 14–16; xxiii. 5. It shall be firm, or established with him and his family.

29. *His seed also will I make* to endure *for ever.* That is, His posterity shall occupy the throne.—(*a*) This *would* have been true of his descendants, if they had been faithful to God, and had not revolted from him; (*b*) It *is* true of him who is the successor of David in his spiritual kingdom, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Comp. Notes on Isa. ix. 6, 7. ¶ *And his throne as the days of heaven.* As long as the heavens endure; that is, to the end of the world. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxii. 5, 7, 17.

30. *If his children.* His posterity; his successors on the throne. ¶ *Forsake my law.* If they are not regulated by it in the administration of their government, and in their private lives. It is here supposed that they might forsake his law, or fail to observe it; but still there is the assurance that the power would not depart permanently from the successors of David, but that it would be restored ultimately to that line, and be permanent and eternal. ¶ *And walk not in my judgments.* And do not obey my commandments.

31. *If they break my statutes.* Marg., *profane.* The Hebrew word means to pollute or defile; and the idea is, If they practically contemn them; if they regard them as things of nought, or treat them with disdain as a polluted or defiled thing. It *is* in this way that the mass of mankind do regard the commands of God. They treat them with no respect; they practically class them among objects that are polluted, and that are to be avoided as defiled and defiling. ¶ *And keep not my commandments.* If they do not regulate their conduct by my laws.

32. *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod.* They shall be *punished,* though my mercy shall not be wholly taken from them. God has two objects in his dealings with his backsliding and offending people; (*a*) one is to show his displeasure at their conduct, or to punish them; (*b*) the other is to reclaim them. All who have been truly converted, or who are truly his people, will be recovered though they fall into sin; but it may be done, and will be likely to be done, in such a way as to show his own displeasure at their offences. ¶ *And their iniquity with stripes.* The word rendered *stripes* means properly a stroke, a blow; then, judgments or calamities, such as God sends on men as a punishment for their sins. Gen. xii. 17; Ex. xi. 1; Ps. xxxviii. 11.

33. *Nevertheless my loving-kindness.* My mercy; my favour. I will not utterly cast him off. He shall not be in the condition of those who are my enemies, or who are entirely forsaken. ¶ *Will I not utterly take from him.* Marg., *I will not make void from.* The Hebrew word — פָּרַר, *parar*—means to break, to break in pieces; then, to violate, as a covenant; then, to make vain, to bring to nought, to frustrate; then, to annul, to abolish. The idea here is that of making entirely vain; wholly removing from; or taking

from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to [1] fail.

34 My covenant will I not break, [y] nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

35 Once have I sworn by my holiness, [2] that I will not lie unto David.

36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

[1] *lie.* [y] Ps. cxi. 5, 9. [2] *if I lie.*

completely away. The meaning is, that he would *not* wholly take away his favour; he would *not* entirely abandon him; he would not suffer him to become wholly apostate; he would *not* leave him to ruin. The covenant once made would be accomplished; the promise given would be carried out. ¶ *Nor suffer my faithfulness.* My faithfulness as *pledged* in the covenant or promise. ¶ *To fail.* Marg., *lie.* I will not prove false, or deal falsely in the pledge which I have made. It shall not appear at last that I have made a promise which has not been kept. This passage contains a very important principle in regard to the dealings of God with his people. The principle is, that if men are converted, if they in fact become his people—he will never suffer them wholly to fall away and perish. They *may* be suffered to backslide; they *may* fall into sin, but they will not be allowed to go so far as to apostatize wholly. They will be brought back again. Whatever method may be necessary for this, will be adopted. Commands; warnings; entreaties; remonstrances;—their own experience; the admonitions of others; the influences of the Holy Spirit:—judgments and calamities; sickness; loss of property; bereavement; disappointment; disgrace;—any of these, or all of these, may be resorted to, in order to bring them back; but they *will* be brought back. God, in mercy and in love, will so visit them with sorrow and trouble that they shall be recovered, and that their "spirit shall be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

34. *My covenant will I not break.* Literally, I will not pollute, defile, profane. See Notes on ver. 31, where the same word is used. God says that *he* will not do in regard to the covenant as *they* had done. ¶ *Nor alter the thing,* etc. The promise which I have made. I will not make it a *different* thing. I will not modify its conditions, or withdraw it. It shall stand precisely as it was when I uttered it. What God promises will be *exactly* performed.

35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness.* That is, once for all;—a single oath—an oath once taken by me—makes it certain. To swear by his "holiness" is to pledge his own holy nature; to make it as certain as that he is holy; to stake the whole question of his holiness on that. That is, *If* this should not be accomplished,—*if* he should fail in this,—it would prove that he was *not* a holy God. ¶ *That I will not lie unto David.* Marg., as in Heb., *if I lie.* The meaning is, He would be found faithful to the promise. See vers. 3, 4; comp. 2 Sam. vii. 8–16.

36. *His seed shall endure for ever,* etc. His posterity. See Notes on ver. 29. There, the expression is, "his throne as the days of heaven." Here it is, "his throne as the sun before me." The meaning is the same. It would stand through all time. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxii. 5.

37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon.* As long as the moon shall endure. The heavenly bodies are the most permanent objects that we know of; and they, therefore, became the emblems of stability and perpetuity. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxii. 7. ¶ *And as a faithful witness in heaven.* As the witness in heaven, or

38 But [z] thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, *by casting it* to the ground.

40 Thou hast broken down [a] all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.

41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.

42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

[z] 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ps. lx. 1, 10; Hosea ix. 17.

[a] Isa. v. 5, 6.

in the sky, is sure. The reference is to the moon, regarded as a *witness* for God. What is said here of the moon as an index of his faithfulness, might be said also of the sun and the stars; but the beauty of the image is increased by the attention being fixed to a single object. As the moon is fixed, regular, enduring,—so are the promises and purposes of God. Such were the promises made to David; such was the oath which had been taken by God; such the covenant which he had made. The psalmist now proceeds (vers. 38–45) to show that this oath and these promises *seemed* to be disregarded; that there were things occurring which *appeared* as if God had forgotten them; that there was not that manifest prosperity and favour which was implied in the promise; but that a series of calamities had occurred which it was difficult to reconcile with these solemn pledges. On the ground of this he prays (vers. 46–52) that God would return, and would remember his covenant, and would bless David and his people.

38. *But thou hast cast off.* Literally, Thou hast treated as a foul, offensive thing; thou hast treated him to whom these promises were made, as if he were a vile and detestable object—as that which one throws away because it is worthless or offensive. ¶ *And abhorred.* Hast despised; that is, as if it were an object of aversion or contempt. Comp. Ps. lx. 1, 10. ¶ *Thou hast been wroth.* Literally, "Thou hast suffered [thine anger] to overflow," or to pour itself forth. See Ps. lxxviii. 21, 59. ¶ *With thine anointed.* With him who had been anointed as king,—anointed as *thine own*—to administer justice, and to rule for thee. 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 13. This *might* seem to refer to the time of Absalom, when David was driven from his throne and his kingdom; see, however, the Introduction to the Psalm.

39. *Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant.* Thou hast dealt with him as if there were no such covenant; as if no such promise had been made to him. The word rendered *made void*, means *to abhor*, or *reject*. ¶ *Thou hast profaned his crown*, by casting it *to the ground.* Literally, "Thou hast profaned to the earth his crown;" that is, Thou hast treated it *as* a polluted thing; a thing to be rejected and abhorred; a thing which one casts indignantly upon the ground.

40. *Thou hast broken down all his hedges.* His walls or defences; all that he relied on for safety. ¶ *Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.* His towers; fortifications; defences. The enemy has been suffered to destroy them. They are now heaps of ruins.

41. *All that pass by the way spoil him.* The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Ps. lxxx. 12. See Notes on that place. The idea is that of fields or vineyards, where all the fences, the walls, and the hedges are thrown down so that they become like an open common. ¶ *He is a reproach to his neighbours.* An object of ridicule, as if he were forsaken by God; as if cast out and despised.

42. *Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries.* Hast given them the victory. Thou hast suffered them to accomplish their purposes. ¶ *Thou*

43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

44 Thou hast made his [1] glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.

45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide [b] thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

[1] *brightness.*

[b] Ps. lxxxv. 5.

hast made all his enemies to rejoice. They joy or rejoice in the success of their plans; in their triumphs over thy servant and over his people.

43. *Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword.* That is, Thou hast turned it *away*, so that when it is raised to strike, it does not descend on the object aimed at by the blow. The meaning is, that he had not been successful in battle, or had been defeated. ¶ *And hast not made him to stand in the battle.* To stand firm; to hold his ground. He has been driven back; his forces have fled.

44. *Thou hast made his glory to cease.* Marg., *brightness.* Luther, "Thou destroyest his purity." The original word means *brightness, splendour.* The literal translation here would be, "Thou causest to cease from being brightness;" that is, Thou hast taken away from his brightness, so that it is gone. The allusion is to the splendour, the glory, the magnificence connected with his rank as king. This had been destroyed, or had come to nought. ¶ *And cast his throne down to the ground.* See ver. 39.

45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened.* This does not mean that he had shortened his life, but that he had abbreviated the period of his vigour, his hope, and his prosperity; instead of lengthening out these, and prolonging them into advancing years, he had by calamities, disappointments, reverses, and troubles, as it were, abridged them. No such youthful vigour, no such youthful hope now remained. The feelings of age—the cutting off from the world—had come suddenly upon him, even before he had reached the season when this might be expected to occur. Though at a time of life and in circumstances when he might have hoped for a longer continuance of that youthful vigour, he had suddenly been brought into the sad condition of an old man. ¶ *Thou hast covered him with shame.* Hast clothed him with shame or disgrace. Everything in his circumstances and in his appearance indicates shame and disgrace, and the Divine displeasure.

46. *How long,* LORD? How long is this to continue? Can it be that this is to continue always? Is there to be no change for the better? Are the promises which have been made, never to be fulfilled? Comp. Notes on Ps. xiii. 1; lxxvii. 7–9. ¶ *Wilt thou hide thyself for ever?* Thy favour. Wilt thou never come forth and manifest thyself as the Helper of those who trust in thee? ¶ *Shall thy wrath burn like fire?* Fire which entirely consumes; fire which never ceases as long as there is anything to burn; fire which never puts itself out, but which wholly destroys that on which it preys.

47. *Remember how short my time is.* The word rendered *time*—חֶלֶד *kheled* — means *duration; lifetime.* Ps. xxxix. 5. Then it means life; time; age; the world. Literally here, "Remember;—I;—what duration." The meaning is plain. Bear in remembrance that my time *must* soon come to an end. Life is brief. In a short period the time will come for me to die; and if these promises are fulfilled to me, it must be done soon. Remember that these troubles and sorrows cannot continue for a much longer period without exhaust-

48 What [c] man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Lord, where *are* thy former loving-kindnesses, *which* thou swarest [d] unto David in thy truth?

50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;

c Heb. ix. 27.

d ver. 35.

ing all my appointed time upon the earth. If God was ever to interpose and bless him, it must be done speedily, for he would soon pass away. The promised bestowment of favour must be conferred soon, or it could not be conferred at all. The psalmist prays that God would remember this. So it is proper for *us* to pray that God would bless us *soon;* that he would not withhold his grace now; that there may be no delay; that he would (we may say it with reverence) bear in remembrance that our life is very brief, and that if grace is to be bestowed in order to save us, or in order to make us useful, it must be bestowed soon. A young man may properly employ this prayer; how much more appropriately one who is rapidly approaching old age, and the end of life! ¶ *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* As thou dost *seem* to have done, since they accomplish so little in the world, and since so many appear wholly to miss the great purpose of life! Nothing, in certain moods of mind, will strike one more forcibly or more painfully than the thought that the mass of men seem to have been made *in vain.* Nothing is accomplished by them worthy of the powers with which they are endowed; nothing worthy of so long living for; nothing worthy of the efforts which they actually put forth. In a large portion of mankind there is an utter failure in securing even the objects which they seek to secure; in numerous cases, when they have secured the object, it is not worth the effort which it has cost; in all cases, the same effort, or an effort made less strenuous, laborious, costly, and continuous, *would have secured an object of real value—worth all their effort—the immortal crown!*

48. *What man* is he that *liveth, and shall not see death?* Shall not die,—to *see* death being an expression often used to denote death itself. Death is represented as a real object, now invisible, but which will make itself visible to us when we die. The meaning here is, "All men are mortal; this universal law must apply to kings as well as to other men; in a short time he to whom these promises pertain will pass away from the earth; and the promises made to him cannot then be fulfilled." ¶ *Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* His life. Will he be able to deliver that from the *power* of the grave;—in Hebrew, *Sheol.* Death—the grave—Sheol—asserts a universal dominion over mankind, and no one can be rescued from that stern power.

49. *Lord, where* are *thy former loving-kindnesses.* Thy mercies; thy pledges; thy promises. Where are those promises which thou didst make formerly to David? Are they accomplished? Or are they forgotten and disregarded? They *seem* to be treated as a thing of nought; as if they had *not* been made. He relied on them; but they are not now fulfilled. ¶ Which *thou swarest unto David.* Which thou didst solemnly promise, even with the implied solemnity of an oath. ¶ *In thy truth.* Pledging thy veracity.

50. *Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants.* Remember this, so as to cause it to pass away; be not forgetful or unmindful of this. Comp. ver. 47. The psalmist desired that all this might be before the mind of God as a reason why he should help him. These promises had been made

51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

52 Blessed [e] *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

[e] Hab. iii. 17—19.

to David and his people. They had relied on them, and they were now reproached as having trusted to promises which had never been made. This reproach was consequent on what seemed to be the failure to fulfil those promises; and as this reproach came upon God, and was a reflection on his fidelity, the psalmist prays that he would allow it to come before him. ¶ How *I do bear in my bosom* the reproach of *all the mighty people.* Literally, "I bear in my bosom all the many people." That is, everything that pertained to them came upon him. All their troubles; all their reverses; all their complaints; all their murmurings, seemed to come upon him. He was held responsible for everything pertaining to them; all this pressed upon his heart. Comp. the bitter complaint of Moses in Numb. xi. 11–15. The phrase "to bear in the bosom" here, is equivalent to bearing it on the heart. Trouble, anxiety, care, sorrow, seem to press *on the heart,* or fill the bosom with distressing emotions, and lay on it a heavy burden. The allusion here is not merely to *reproach,* but the meaning is that everything pertaining to the people came on him, and it crushed him down. The burdens of his own people, as well as the reproaches of all around him, came upon him; and he felt that he was not able to bear it.

51. *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached,* O LORD. Have reproached thee and me. Wherewith they reproach thy character and cause, and reproach me for having trusted to promises which seem not to be fulfilled. As the representative of thy cause, I am compelled to bear all this, and it breaks my heart. ¶ *Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.* Of myself, as the anointed king. They have reproached *my footsteps;* that is, they have *followed* me with reproaches—treading along behind me. Wherever I go, wherever I put my foot down in my wanderings, I meet this reproach.

52. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *for evermore.* Praise to God always. So Chrysostom was accustomed to say, even when driven out as an exile and a wanderer, "Blessed be God for everything." The passage here denotes entire acquiescence in God; perfect confidence in him; a belief that he was right, and faithful, and true. It is an instance of the faith which those who are truly pious have in God, in all circumstances, and at all times; of their belief that he is worthy of entire confidence, and ought always to be praised. Comp. Job i. 21. At the close of all kinds of trouble—and in the midst of all kinds of trouble—true piety will enable us to say, "BLESSED BE GOD."

APPENDIX

PSALM XLII.

For the sons of Korah. Twelve psalms are, in the titles, ascribed to the SONS OF KORAH. The persons so designated were a Levitical family of the line of Kohath, and derived their name from their ancestor Korah—the same whose name is commemorated with infamy in the history of the wanderings. Both by the original Mosaic ordinance, and by the ordinance of "David and Samuel the seer," "the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord" was committed to them, 1 Ch. ix. 23—a circumstance that sheds new interest on the sentiment expressed by them in the eighty-fourth psalm: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." When it became known that the Lord had rejected Saul, and anointed David to the kingdom by the hand of their kinsman Samuel, certain Korahites were among the first to cast in their lot with the youthful hope of Israel, 1 Ch. xii. 6. In the person of Heman, the grandson of Samuel, the family furnished David with one of his three prophet-psalmists; and of the twenty-four courses of singers, fourteen were presided over by Heman's sons. "All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God," 1 Ch. xxv. 6. As singers, the Korahites are mentioned as late as the reign of Jehoshaphat, 2 Ch. xx. 19; as porters, they are mentioned as serving in the second temple, Neh. xi. 19. None of the psalms bearing their name bears any mark of having been written after the captivity—a circumstance worth noting, as a corroboration of the accuracy of the superscriptions. It may be safely assumed that at least four of the twelve Korahite psalms were written by David's contemporaries. Of these Ps. xliv. appears to have been written in the crisis of David's Syrian and Edomite wars, when destruction seemed impending over the kingdom. Ps. xlii. and xliii. (which go together) must have been written by some of the Korahites who accompanied David in his flight beyond the Jordan during Absalom's rebellion.—*Binnie.*

[*Current of thought in the psalm.*] God is of a twofold sort. At times he is a concealed and hidden God; as, when the conscience in temptation feels sin, feels other injuries, whether bodily or spiritual, it clings to these with heart and thought, and cannot find consolation in the grace and goodness of God. Those who judge of God after such a concealed form, fall, without remedy, into despair and ruin. But there is still another and manifested form of God, or a disclosed and not concealed God, viz. the real form of the good, gracious, compassionate, reconciled God. As also the sun is of two sorts, though there is in reality but one sun, just as there is but one God; for it may be named another sun when it appears dark and covered with clouds, compared with what it is when shining bright and clear from the heavens. And if one were to judge when the sun is dark and veiled in clouds, he would conclude that there would never more be clear day, but only eternal night. Now, however, is this an art, and in truth a golden art, to be able to hold, that though the sun, when covered with clouds and fog, cannot give a clear light, yet it will break forth through the clouds and fog, and again beam upon the world with a bright lustre. So does the prophet act here, when under temptation, comforting himself, and desiring to see the sun when it should break forth through the clouds. He thinks in his heart upon another image than he at present sees before his eyes. And though his conscience

is affrighted, though all evil threatens, and he is ready to sink amid doubts, he yet elevates himself in faith, holds fast by hope, and consoles himself that God will help him, and again appoint him to see the service of God in the only place which God had chosen for it on the surface of the earth.—*Luther.*

2. *My soul thirsteth for God.* David earnestly desired restoration to the sanctuary. He loved the place and its privileges. But what he longed chiefly for was the living God himself. Truly pious men, it has been said, were never satisfied with the ordinances of God without the God of ordinances.

6. *Therefore will I remember thee.* He recalls his seasons of choice communion by the river and among the hills, and especially that dearest hour upon the little hill, where love spake her sweetest language and revealed her nearest fellowship. It is great wisdom to store up in memory our choice occasions of converse with Heaven; we may want them another day, when the Lord is slow in bringing back his banished ones, and our soul is aching with fear. "His love in times past" has been a precious cordial to many a fainting one; like soft breath it has fanned the smoking flax into a flame, and bound up the bruised reed. Oh, never-to-be-forgotten valley of Achor, thou art a door of hope. Fair days, now gone, ye have left a light behind you which cheers our present gloom. Or does David mean that even where he was he would bethink him of his God; does he declare that, forgetful of time and place, he would count Jordan as sacred as Siloa, Hermon as holy as Zion, and even Mizar, that insignificant rising ground, as glorious as the mountains which are round about Jerusalem! Oh! it is a heavenly heart which can sing—

"To me remains nor place nor time;
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there.

"Could I be cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot;
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all."

—*Spurgeon.*

7. *Deep calleth unto deep.* This language is descriptive of a great temptation. For just as on the sea, when there is storm or tempest, wind and sea roar, and the waves and billows mount the ship, now high aloft, now into a great deep, so that one sees on all sides nothing but one abyss calling, in a manner, to another, and one thinks the abyss will swallow all up, and the mighty waves will fall upon the ship and cover her; so happens it invariably with the heart in heavy trials. But God has the floods in his hand and power, can soon alter and assuage them, and by his word still them, as the Lord Christ commands the wind and sea and it becomes a great calm.—*John Arnd.*

Waterspouts. The great home of waterspouts is Cape Horn and the adjacent waters; but Shaw saw them at three points on the coast of Syria. They at times visit all tropical and temperate latitudes. *Anderson:* "A waterspout is a large tube or cylinder formed of clouds by means of the electric fluid, the base being uppermost, and the point being let down perpendicularly from the clouds. It has a particular kind of *circular motion* at the point; and being hollow within, attracts vast quantities of water, which it frequently pours down in torrents on the earth or the sea." It is a great terror to seamen. If one empties itself on a ship, she is gone.—*Plumer.*

PSALM XLIII.

5. *For I shall yet praise thee.* Times of complaint will soon end, and seasons of praise will begin. Come, my heart, look out of the window, borrow the telescopic glass, forecast a little, and sweeten thy chamber with sprigs of the sweet herb of hope.

Who is the health of my countenance and my God. My God will clear the furrows from my brow and the tear-marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the storm. The psalm has a blessed ending, such as we would fain imitate when death puts an end to our mortal existence.—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XLIV.

The meaning and drift of parts of this psalm have been frequently, if not generally, misunderstood: the result has often been a misapprehension of the spirit of the whole. Ver. 20, 21 appear in our English version (and, indeed, in most versions) as a mere assertion that God cannot be deceived. They contain in reality a solemn protestation of steadfastness, with an appeal to God for the truth of it. *We have not forgotten the name of our God, nor stretched out our hands to a strange god; lo, God*

shall search this out, and he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yet, again, it must not be supposed that either these words or any others in the psalm necessarily involve any assertion of *past* innocence. They simply imply that the suppliants are not at the present time in the condition of persons who have forgotten or denied God, and who therefore no longer remember or acknowledge him. Such present faithfulness, whether asserted or not, would be a necessary condition of actual prayer. The subject of this particular psalm brings the assertion of it into unusual prominence. Lastly, it would appear from the ordinary versions of the psalm as though ver. 9–16 were the language of direct complaint, and as though, in the subsequent verses, the church were upbraiding God for afflicting her, and were praying to be delivered for her own merits' sake. But this is not so. The word rendered *but* at the beginning of ver. 9 should rather be rendered *even though, what though;* and its force should be carried on through the succeeding verses. These verses thus form a lengthened protasis, which is summed up in the beginning of ver. 17, and to which then follows the apodosis. The whole is therefore a resolute profession of steadfastness: "What though all this be come upon us, yet will we continue faithful." And while this faithfulness of the worshippers necessarily forms the condition of their prayers being heard, their supplication is, nevertheless, "Redeem us for thy mercies' sake."—*Thrupp.*

3. *They got not the land in possession by their own sword.* Here it is necessary to observe the mode of reasoning which the prophet employs when he argues that it is by the free gift of God that the people obtained the land in heritage, seeing they had not acquired it by their own power. We then truly begin to yield to God what belongs to him, when we consider how worthless our own strength is. And certainly the reason why men, as it were through disdain, conceal and forget the benefits which God has conferred on them, must be owing to a delusive imagination which leads them to arrogate something to themselves as properly their own. The best means, therefore, of cherishing in us habitually a spirit of gratitude towards God is to expel from our minds this foolish opinion of our own ability. There is still in the concluding part of the verse another expression which contains a more illustrious testimony to the grace of God, when the psalmist resolves the whole into the good pleasure of God: *Thou hadst a favour for them.* The prophet does not suppose any worthiness in the person of Abraham, nor imagine any desert in his posterity, on account of which God dealt so bountifully with them, but ascribes the whole to the good pleasure of God. His words seem to be taken from the solemn declaration of Moses: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you," Deut. vii. 7, 8. Special mention is here made of the land of Canaan; but the prophet has stated the general principle why it was that God vouchsafed to reckon that people for his flock and peculiar heritage. And certainly the source and origin of the church is the free love of God; and whatever benefits he bestows upon his church, they all proceed from the same source. The reason, therefore, why we are gathered into the church, and are nourished and defended by the hand of God, is only to be sought in God. Nor does the psalmist here treat of the general benevolence of God, which extends to the whole human race; but he discourses of the difference which exists between the elect and the rest of the world; and the cause of this difference is here referred to the mere good pleasure of God.—*Calvin.*

5. *Through thee will we push down our enemies.* The fight was very close; bows were of no avail, and swords failed to be of service; it came to daggers drawing, and hand-to-hand wrestling, pushing, and tugging. Jacob's God was renewing in the seed of Jacob their father's wrestling. And how fared it with faith then? Could she stand foot to foot with her foe and hold her own? Yea, verily, she came forth victorious from the encounter, for she is great at a close push, and overthrows all her adversaries, the Lord being her helper.

Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. The Lord's name served instead of weapons, and enabled those who used it to leap on their foes and crush them with jubilant valour. In union and communion with God, saints work wonders. If God be for us, who can be against us? Mark well that all the conquests of these

believers are said to be "through thee," "through thy name." Never let us forget this, lest going a warfare at our own charges we fail most ignominiously. Let us not, however, fall into the equally dangerous sin of distrust, for the Lord can make the weakest of us equal to any emergency. Though to-day we are timid and defenceless as sheep, he can by his power make us strong as the firstling of his bullock, and cause us to push as with the horns of unicorns, until those who rose up against us shall be so crushed and battered as never to rise again. Those who of themselves can scarcely keep their feet, but like little babes totter and fall, are by divine assistance made to overthrow their foes, and set their feet upon their necks. Read Christian's fight with Apollyon, and see how

> "The man so bravely played the man
> He made the fiend to fly."
>
> —*Spurgeon.*

23. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* God sleepeth not, but the psalmist puts it so, as if on no other theory he could explain the divine inaction. He would fain see the great Judge ending oppression, and giving peace to the holy, therefore does he cry "Awake." He cannot understand why the reign of tyranny and the oppression of virtue are permitted, and therefore he inquires, "Why sleepest thou?" *Arise.* This is all thou needest to do; one move of thine will save us. *Cast us not off for ever.* Long enough hast thou deserted us. The terrible effects of thine absence are destroying us; end thou our calamities, and let thine anger be appeased. In persecuting times men are apt to cry, Where is the God of Israel? At the thought of what the saints have endured from their haughty enemies, we join our voices in the great martyr cry, and sing with the bard of Paradise:—

> "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
> Even those who kept thy truth so pure of old;
> When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
> Forget not: in thy book record their groans
> Who were thy sheep."
>
> —*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XLV.

The forty-fifth is another Messianic psalm belonging to this period (the age of Solomon). It was not written by Solomon, but by "the sons of Korah"—the same Levitical family who had made such precious contributions to the Psalter in the preceding reign. Its theme—its primary and proper theme—is the glory of the Lord Christ and the church's marriage to him; and this is celebrated with gorgeous imagery, which reminds us of the reign of king Solomon at every turn. The king's house is an ivory palace, fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. The queen is arrayed in gold of Ophir, and the daughter of Tyre brings in her hand the wealth of the nations for a wedding gift. The parallel between the Song of Solomon and the psalm cannot escape any reader, and we may very confidently attribute them both to the brilliant age of the son of David. . . .

The psalm is a nuptial song—the epithalamium of some great king of Israel, who has fixed his love on a Gentile maiden, the daughter of a princely house, and is being united in marriage to her in his own palace. The glories of the king are first described, his superhuman beauty and gracious words, the everlasting stability of his throne, his martial achievements, and the mild equity of his administration. Then follows a description of the marriage. The queen-consort is at the king's right hand, in gold of Ophir; she is conducted—she and her maidens—into the king's palace; and the daughter of opulent Tyre, who has come to grace the day with her presence, brings in her hand a wedding gift. It is a song resplendent with the richest ornaments of oriental poetry. Respecting its ultimate and proper intention, there has been from the first an unfaltering consent among all devout readers. The opening verse—

> "My heart poureth forth a goodly matter:
> I speak the things which I have made touching the king:
> My tongue is the pen of a ready writer:"

—this verse, I say, in their judgment, is strictly parallel to that of the apostle: "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church," Eph. v. 32. There are, no doubt, differences of opinion in regard to what may be called the *theory* of the psalm; some understanding it to refer to Christ and the church directly and exclusively, while others think there is an immediate reference to Solomon (or some

other Hebrew king) and his Gentile wife. But this difference is quite immaterial, so far as our present purpose is concerned; for those who think there is an immediate reference to an earthly marriage agree with the others in holding that there are many things in the psalm which, in their full and proper sense, apply only to Christ, and that it was designed from the first to lead men's thoughts to him.—*Binnie.*

6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Referring to the Unitarian rendering here, viz. *God is thy throne,* i.e. the support of thy throne, Dr. J. P. Smith justly remarks: "The use of a metaphor so harsh, and apparently repugnant to good taste and to piety, should have been justified by ample proofs of the same or a similar usage. No such proofs are produced. God is often denominated a rock, a tower, a fortress, a shield, a refuge to his faithful servants; but in all these and similar metaphors there is an obvious superiority in strength and dignity preserved to the Divine Being. The reader immediately associates with these expressions the ideas of power and grandeur in a PROTECTING Being, and of his pre-eminence above the objects protected. But it is the reverse in the case brought before us. A *throne* is merely a seat; and it derives its dignity altogether from the character and dominion of the person who sits upon it. To call the Eternal Majesty *the throne of a creature* shocks all taste and good feeling; and it grossly violates the reverence which is ever to be maintained towards him. That heart-touching reverence is amongst the most distinguishing characters of the Scripture style."—*Scripture Testimony.*

10–15. *Hearken, O daughter,* &c. The Psalter, which sets forth so much truth respecting the person and work of Christ—truth more precious than gold, and sweeter than the honey-comb — is not silent respecting the bond subsisting between him and his people—THE MYSTICAL UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. When a prince sets his affections on a woman of lowly rank and takes her home to be his wife, the two are so united that her debts become his, his wealth and honours become hers. Now, that there is formed between Christ and the church—between Christ and every soul that will consent to receive him—a connection, of which this most intimate of all natural relations is the analogue and type, we have already found to be not only taught in the Psalms, but to be implied in the very structure of many of them. He takes his people's sins upon him, and they receive the right to become the sons of God; the One Spirit of God wherewith he was baptized without measure, dwells in them according to the measure of the grace that is given them. I will only add further, that this union, besides being implied in so many places, is expressly set forth in one most glorious psalm—the nuptial song of Christ and the church—which has for its peculiar theme the home-bringing of Christ's elect, that they may be joined to him in a union that shall survive the everlasting hills.—*Binnie.*

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift,* Hengstenberg renders *—So will the daughter of Tyre implore thee with gifts*—and adds, The object of the earnest entreaty is reception into the community of the people of God, comp. Is. xliv. 5; Ps. xlvii. 9. That Tyre should seek, with fervent supplication and presents, to gain the favour of the queen, and to make her inclined to fulfil her desire, is inexplicable on the literal interpretation. The proud island-city never stood in a relation of dependence to Israel; she always held it to be beneath her dignity to make a humble suit for his favour: Israel's king and queen had nothing which she could have sought from them with imploring earnestness. In this view also one does not see how the humble solicitations could be made dependent on the place the queen had in the heart of the king. On the other hand, every difficulty vanishes with the figurative interpretation. Only when the church of God really occupies the *position* of the church of God, can prayer be directed to her for reception into her society. The church exercises a drawing power toward those that are without, in exact proportion to her own internal connection with the Lord. Her surrender to the Lord forms the ground of the heathen's surrender to her. According to other passages also, the church of God in Messianic times is the object of earnest desire, as generally of the whole heathen world, which brings its riches to her, comp. Ps. lxxii. 10; Is. lx. 6, ss.; Hag. ii. 7, 8, so in particular of proud Tyre; in the likewise Korahite Psalm lxxxvii., Tyre, ver. 4, is

expressly named among other powerful nations for reception into the kingdom of God, and according to Is. xxiii. 18, the gain of Tyre shall one day become holy to the Lord.—עשירי עם, as apposition to בת צר, not the rich of the peoples, but of the people, or among the people, *q. d.* the richest persons, indicates why it is, that precisely Tyre's solicitations for favour are promised to the queen, viz. that she is singled out of the mass of the other heathen nations, whose homage is promised to the queen in and with hers, only as being the richest city of the old world.

PSALM XLVI.

The historical occasion of the psalm cannot with certainty be determined. It was called forth by a catastrophe which befel the kingdom of Judah (comp. in ver. 8: come, *behold* the works of the Lord), and has for its immediate object Judah's deliverance. Otherwise the *particular* in the last strophe would not serve as a foundation for the *general* in the two first strophes; especially this: "God helps her at the break of morning," would not be comprehensible, as it presupposes a heavy oppression on Judah. The admonition also in ver. 10: "Leave off and know that I am God," has only then a motive laid for it, when the desolation effected upon the earth, ver. 8, and the cessation of war in ver. 9, could be recognized by all as done in behalf of Israel's salvation; for only then was the fact a dissuasive for the heathen against fighting with Israel, a demonstrative proof of the godhead of his God. In like manner it is then only that ver. 11 appears as properly explained. But at the same time this catastrophe was an important event in the *world's history*, the annihilation of the power of a world-conqueror: with Judah the *whole circle of the earth* also is delivered, in so far as it could be surveyed from Palestine, ver. 9, and the Lord has thereby glorified himself through all the *earth*, ver. 10. By observing these distinctive marks, hypotheses, such as those of De Wette, who thinks the psalm refers to *foreign* wars, which God had silenced, and of Hitzig, who refers it to a sudden scaring of the Syrians and Ephraimites from the Jewish territory, are entirely set aside. In the whole Israelitish history there is *only one event*, of which we can here think, the destruction of Sennacherib's army before the gates of Jerusalem, Is. xxxvii. 36. That whole chapter and ch. xxxvi. must be read, if we would come to the full understanding and enjoyment of the psalm. After the exodus from Egypt there was no occasion more appropriate than this for bringing vividly out the leading idea in this psalm. The entire might of the world, which, as formerly in Egypt, so then was concentrated in Assyria, the most powerful of kingdoms, up till that time resistless in its march of conquest, came against Jerusalem. To the words: "Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying, The Lord will deliver us; hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?"—there was an equally impressive answer given then, as formerly to the question of Pharaoh: Who is Jehovah? When all seemed already to be lost, the holy city was, by an immediate exercise of divine omnipotence, delivered, without any co-operation on the part of its feeble inhabitants, without even any interruption to the undertaking of the Assyrians from their chief enemies, the Egyptians. Then, when real greatness was great also in appearance, when the power of the world had assumed a dazzling splendour, at such a time it was, that it was said to the possessors thereof, as is done here in ver. 10, "Cease and know that I am God." . . . It is self-evident that the subject of the psalm upon which Luther's "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," rests, is no Old Testament idea. There is only *one* church of God through all ages, and to it this idea belongs. When Christ supports his church, the gates of hell may rage: this is only the New Testament form for the general fundamental truth.—*Hengstenberg.*

There is sufficient evidence in the psalm now before us to show that it was composed in the reign of Hezekiah, on the occasion of the destruction of the Assyrian host of Sennacherib. For the mercy which it celebrates is evidently the preservation of the holy city, before the walls of which the Assyrian army perished: and the psalmist purposely avoids any allusion to the Jewish territory, through which, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the king of Assyria had been permitted to pass, overflowing and going over, and reaching even to the neck, though discomfited before he could succeed in crushing the capital. In the mention, however vague, in

mountains being carried into the midst of the sea, we have a manifest reference to the previous overthrow by the Assyrian power of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, and of Hamath, Arphad, and other northern states; mountains being continually used in Scripture as the emblems of kingdoms, and the swelling waves of the sea representing the formidable advance of the great heathen empire. In contrast to the roaring and blustering of this Assyrian ocean, the divine grace by which Jerusalem was preserved is compared to the springing streams of the fountain of Gihon, which, by the formation of a new channel or conduit, Hezekiah had, in preparation for resisting the anticipated siege, lately introduced into the heart of the city. A similar contrast had been drawn in the reign of Ahaz by the prophet Isaiah, when he compared the divinely established dominion of the house of David, representing the kingdom of God, to the softly going waters of the fountain of Siloah, and the opposing might of the Assyrian monarchy, representing the tyranny of the world, to the overflowing stream of the Euphrates. In the words which form the refrain of the psalm, "The Lord of hosts is with us," there is a reminiscence of the name Immanuel, "With us God," on which the recent prophecies of Isaiah had dwelt. Ver. 11, "Be still and know that I am God," is particularly appropriate in reference to the destruction of the Assyrian host, which was accomplished by the arm of the Lord, without the intervention of any associated human willing agency. Hardly less worthy of note are the concluding words of ver. 5, "right early," or "at dawn of morning," in allusion to the same event, when, as has been justly observed, there intervened but one night between the highest pitch of distress and the most complete deliverance: "When they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." And in thorough keeping with what actually occurred is the mention also of the desolations which the Lord had made in the earth, of his breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder, and burning the chariot in the fire. There is, in fact, hardly a psalm in the Psalter reflecting so manifestly as this the circumstances of the period at which it was written.

As the destruction of Sennacherib's host is the most signal historical instance of the issue of the outward conflict between God and the powers of the world, so in the present psalm, the basis of Luther's "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," the Christian church has found the readiest expression of her confidence in God in the midst of surrounding dangers. That the psalmist avowedly spoke in the name of the universal church of all time may be gathered from the first clause of ver. 9, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;" words of essentially prophetical import, which must wait to the end for their full accomplishment.—*Thrupp.*

1. *God is our refuge and our strength.* Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word "*our;*" make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, "He is *my* refuge and strength." Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all-sufficient, our defence and might are equal to all emergencies. "*A very present help in trouble,*" or *in distresses, he has so been found,* he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasized by the word "*very*" in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very

dark with us, let brave spirits say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

"A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,
Is God in time of danger;
A shield and sword in every shock,
From foe well-known or stranger."
—*Spurgeon.*

2. *Though the earth be removed.* The sentiment of Horace on the just man: Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae, appears excellent at first sight. But since such a person as he draws has never been found, he merely trifles. *This* greatness of soul, on the other hand, is based solely on the *protection of God*, and on the promises which he has made to his own people, and in this way easily overcomes the terror which threatens destruction to all creatures.—*Calvin.*

6. *The heathen raged.* The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea. "*The kingdoms were moved.*" A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord. "*He uttered his voice, the earth melted.*" With no other instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice, and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word! O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!—*Spurgeon.*

PSALM XLVII.

The occasion of the psalm was, according to ver. 3, an overthrow of several *heathen peoples*, accomplished by the visible interposition of God, who had leagued themselves against Israel, and who, according to ver. 4, had set out with the purpose of expelling Israel from his *land*. The only thing that suggests itself as a fit reference is the victory of *Jehoshaphat* over the combined Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Arabians, in 2 Ch. xx. Several nations were then united against Israel; they were set upon nothing less than driving Israel wholly out of his land, comp. 2 Ch. xx. 11; the overthrow of the enemies followed under circumstances which caused the hand of God to be clearly discerned. Surprised by an attack in the rear from a host of freebooting sons of the wilderness, the enemies fled in a *panic*, and as the spirit of mistrust fell upon them, and each people thought itself betrayed by the other, they turned their arms one against another. So Israel obtained a victory without a battle. The reference to that event is favoured by the circumstance that then, according to 2 Ch. xx. 19, the Korahites are expressly mentioned as having been present in the army; that the immediately following psalm refers to the same event, as also Ps. lxxxiii. (these three psalms perfectly suffice for a defence of 2 Ch. xx. against the attacks of modern criticism); finally, that on this supposition we obtain a suitable situation for ver. 5, from 2 Ch. xx. 26, "On the fourth day they assembled themselves together, in the valley of praise, for there they praised the Lord." Before the people left the field of slaughter, to return back to Jerusalem, they held a solemn service in that valley of praise: from that valley God made, as it were, his ascent to heaven, after having achieved redemption for his people. As the army returned into the holy city, so the leader of the host returned to heaven. This psalm was sung in the valley of praise, as the following one in the service of the temple. So *Hengstenberg.*—But whatever the occasion of the psalm, there can be no doubt that these carnal conquests were but shadows of the victories of the Messiah and the future triumphs of the church. "The psalm, says Calvin, "chiefly magnifies the favour which, according to the state of

things at that time, God had graciously vouchsafed to the offspring of Abraham: and salvation to the whole world was to proceed from this source. It however contains at the same time a prophecy of the future kingdom of Christ. It teaches that the glory which then shone under the figure of the material sanctuary will diffuse its splendour far and wide; when God himself will cause the beams of his grace to shine into distant lands, that kings and nations may be united into fellowship with the children of Abraham."

1. *O clap your hands, all ye peoples.* As the psalmist requires the nations, in token of their joy and of their thanksgiving to God, to clap their hands, or rather exhorts them to a more than ordinary joy, the vehemence of which breaks forth, and manifests itself by external expressions, it is certain that he is here speaking of the deliverance which God had wrought for them. Had God erected among the Gentiles some formidable kingdom, this would rather have deprived all of their courage, and overwhelmed them with despair, than given them matter to sing and leap for joy. Besides, the inspired writer does not here treat of some common or ordinary blessings of God; but of such blessings as will fill the whole world with incredible joy, and stir up the minds of all men to celebrate the praises of God. What he adds a little after, that all nations were brought into subjection to Israel, must therefore be necessarily understood not of slavish subjection, but of a subjection which is more excellent and more to be desired than all the kingdoms of the world. It would be unnatural for those who are subdued and brought to submit by force and fear to leap for joy. Many nations were tributary to David, and to his son Solomon; but while they were so, they ceased not at the same time to murmur, and bore impatiently the yoke which was imposed upon them, so far were they from giving thanks to God with joyful and cheerful hearts.—*Calvin.*

5. *God is gone up with a shout.* There is here an allusion to the ancient ceremony which was observed under the law. As the sound of trumpets was wont to be used in solemnizing the holy assemblies, the prophet says that God *goes up*, when the trumpets encourage and stir up the people to magnify and extol his power. When this ceremony was performed in old time, it was just as if a king, making his entrance among his subjects, presented himself to them in magnificent attire and great splendour, by which he gained their admiration and reverence. At the same time the sacred writer, under that shadowy ceremony, doubtless intended to lead us to consider another kind of going up more triumphant—that of Christ when he "ascended up far above all heavens," and obtained the empire of the whole world, and armed with his celestial power, subdued all pride and loftiness. You must remember what I have adverted to before, that the name *Jehovah* is here applied to the ark; for although the essence or majesty of God was not shut up in it, nor his power and operation fixed to it, yet it was not a vain and idle symbol of his presence. God had promised that he would dwell in the midst of the people so long as the Jews worshipped him according to the rule which he had prescribed in the law; and he actually showed that he was truly present with them, and that it was not in vain that he was called upon among them. What is here stated, however, applies more properly to the manifestation of the glory which at length shone forth in the person of Christ. In short, the import of the psalmist's language is, When the trumpets sounded among the Jews, according to the appointment of the law, that was not a mere empty sound which vanished away in air; for God, who intended the ark of the covenant to be a pledge and token of his presence, truly presided in that assembly. From this the prophet draws an argument for enforcing on the faithful the duty of *singing praises to God.* He argues that by engaging in this exercise they will not be acting blindly, or at random, as the superstitious, who, having no certainty in their false systems of religion, lament and howl in vain before their idols. He shows that the faithful have just ground for celebrating with their mouths and with a cheerful heart the praises of God; since they certainly know that he is as present with them as if he had visibly established his royal throne among them.—*Calvin.*

PSALM XLVIII.

Expositors take as the historical occasion of the psalm, either the victory of

Jehoshaphat, or the deliverance from the Assyrians under Hezekiah. To the latter hypothesis it is to be objected, 1. That the discourse here is of many independent kings, who had leagued themselves in a common undertaking against Jerusalem. It is nothing to allege, on the other hand, the saying of the king of Assyria, in Is. x. 8, "Are not all my princes kings?" For that here the discourse is not of such as possibly once were called kings, appears from נוֹעָדוּ in ver. 4, as also from the fact, that here it is always kings that are spoken of, never a king of kings. We never find it thus in the numerous passages which refer to the Assyrians. 2. That here the discourse is of troubled *flight*, not of utter destruction. On the other hand, everything is in perfect accordance with the victory of Jehoshaphat. Then in reality several kings were gathered together against Jerusalem. They came into the immediate neighbourhood of the city, into the wilderness of Tekoa, which is certainly not further than a journey of three hours from Jerusalem, which commands an extensive prospect, and in particular of the environs of Jerusalem,—comp. *Robinson*, P. ii. p. 407 (upon the march of the Moabites and Ammonites, comp. *ib.* p. 426). Their anxious and troubled flight is described quite similarly in the Chronicles. With: "We think, O Lord, on thy loving-kindness in the midst of thy temple," in ver. 9 here, which bespeaks the psalm to have been sung as a song of praise in the temple, as the preceding one on the field of slaughter, comp. 2 Ch. xx. 27, "All Judah and Jerusalem returned, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, back to Jerusalem with joy: and they came to Jerusalem with harps, and cytharas, and trumpets to the house of the Lord." A special reference to Jehoshaphat's time is also found in ver. 7. The omnipotence with which the Lord destroys the enemies, is there placed beside that with which he breaks the ships of Tarshish. The occasion that gave rise to this comparison is recorded in 1 Ki. xxii. 49; 2 Ch. xx. 36, 37. Jehoshaphat had united with Ahaziah in getting ships of merchandise, but the ships were wrecked, נִשְׁבְּרוּ. The internal connection between the two events was the greater, as in that annihilation of the ships of Tarshish there was discerned, according to 2 Ch., a judgment of God.—*Hengstenberg.*

The psalms we owe to the reign of Jehoshaphat are not many. Of only *two* are we quite certain: there may be perhaps *four* or *five*. Some think Ps. xlvi. and xlvii.—both of them Korahite psalms—belong to the period. Certainly we owe to it Ps. xlviii. and lxxxiii.—the former a Korahite psalm, the latter "a song or psalm of Asaph." The character of these odes reminds us that it was a storm of danger that at this epoch awoke for a short time the harps of the Levitical seers. They make mention of an invasion which, as we learn from the historical books, for a while threatened to sweep away Jehoshaphat's throne, and even annihilate the kingdom. The nations bordering on Judah to the east and south, Moab, Ammon, Edom, entered into a coalition against it, and secured the alliance of several more distant powers. They invaded the land from the south, and marched without check till they reached the wilderness of Tekoa, within ten miles of Jerusalem, whence, looking northwards, they could descry the battlements of the city, and the glittering pinnacles of the temple. In this extremity of danger Jehoshaphat and the people betook themselves to prayer. Having received, through one of the prophets, the promise of deliverance, king and people sallied forth in a solemn procession, in the van of which there marched a band of Levites, singing and praising the Lord. When they came in sight of the enemy, they found that God had sown mutual suspicions in the motley host, so that they had turned their swords against each other, and were utterly discomfited. It deserves to be remarked in connection with our subject, that the prophet by whom God's comfortable message was delivered to the king, was Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, "*a Levite of the sons of Asaph;*" and that among the Levites who sang praise to the Lord, mention is made of a band "of the children of the Korahites," 2 Ch. xx. 14–19. It is an interesting and significant coincidence, that of the two psalms known to date from this epoch, one is marked in the superscription as an Asaph-psalm, and the other is assigned to "the sons of Korah." The Asaph-psalm is Ps. lxxxiii., and is the prayer of the congregation when the danger was at its height. It speaks of a confederation of "the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagar-

enes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;" and, among the more distant allies, mention is made of Tyre, and of Assyria itself. Their cry is, "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." The cry of Judah in response is towards heaven: "O my God, make them like a wheel;" or, as Milton translates the prayer—

"My God, oh make them as a wheel,
No quiet let them find;
Giddy and restless let them reel,
Like stubble from the wind.

"As when an aged wood takes fire,
Which on a sudden strays,
The greedy flame runs higher and higher,
Till all the mountains blaze;

"So with thy whirlwind them pursue,
And with thy tempest chase."

Such was the prayer. The answer which God gave, in the flame of discord that consumed the confederate host, is celebrated by the sons of Korah in Ps. xlviii.—*Binnie.*

The Mighty One is King, has entered on his dominion, is seated on his throne, is ruling in righteousness. But where is his capital? It is at *Jerusalem.* Here he manifests himself; and by the glory of his presence being shed over that "City of the great King," brighter than the light of seven days, yet far more mellow and tranquillizing than the sweetest hues of evening, *Jerusalem* becomes

"*The joy of the whole earth,*
(The joy) *of the sides of the north.*"

She has become the joy of the earth, far and near, the source of joy to earth's remotest bounds. Now is fulfilled Is. xxiv. 23. Now is Jerusalem made "beautiful for situation," or, set aloft on its hills in beauty, in another sense than formerly. Now is Zion exalted above the mountains, and obtains established pre-eminence above the hills. And if associations are needed to make the place completely interesting, these are not wanting here. Such deeds have been done here, that Sennacherib's overthrow is in a manner cast into the shade. The gathered kings of earth came up, "they passed" in all the pomp of battle, and the Lord scattered them; and writes here his "*Veni, vidi, vici,*" to all nations:—"*They saw! They marvelled! They were troubled! They hasted away!*" It was as when an east wind hurls the ships of Tarshish on the rocks. It comprised in it all that is recorded as wonderful in the achievements of former days; present events now come fully up to the measure of former good deeds, "*As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts.*" The solemn *Selah-pause* occurs here; and then we look out on a peaceful scene, God known in all the earth, ver. 10. "*Thou art praised wherever thy name is known,*" or rather, now at last thou art getting praise worthy of thy glorious name. Zion is glad, Judah's tears are wiped away, while a voice invites all men to come and survey the bulwarks of the city of the great King, that they may tell it from age to age. The bulwarks are strong, for the Lord's presence, *Jehovah Shammah,* is the wall of fire, on whose battlements the happy citizens walk in security, singing,

"*This God is our God for ever and ever;*
He is our God even over death" (Tholuck: "even beyond death").

—*A. A. Bonar.*

4–6. *Lo, the kings were assembled,* &c. Neither the multitude nor the greatness of the church's foes need alarm her friends. Men can do nothing but play the fool and the coward, if God be against them. "As the east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish, so the divine power strikes terror and astonishment" into the hearts of sinners. All the imaginations that fill the minds of the foes of God and of truth will vanish like the mist of morning. Montgomery beautifully versifies a part of this ode:—

"At the sight of her splendour the kings of the earth
Grew pale with amazement and dread;
Fear seized them like pangs of a premature birth;
They came, they beheld her, and fled.
Thou breakest the ships from the sea-circled clime
When the storm of thy jealousy lowers:
As our fathers have told of thy deeds in their time,
So, Lord, have we witnessed in ours."

Dickson: "Such as come to bring trouble to God's church come to catch trouble to themselves."—*Plumer.*

PSALM XLIX.

Among the psalms which assert the hope of eternal life, an eminent place belongs to the forty-ninth. . . . The psalms which are introduced with a formal preface are very few in number, and they are all psalms of principal

note in their several kinds. . . . And this, . . . instead of being addressed to the Hebrew church, . . . is expressly and emphatically addressed to the church catholic, to "all peoples," even "all the inhabitants of the world." . . . Although indited by a Hebrew pen, it is a Christian psalm, and was from the first inscribed to the Christian church. . . . The theme (like that of Ps. xvii. and lxxiii.) is the mystery of God's providence towards the righteous and the wicked; and the aim of the psalmist is the same, namely, to encourage God's people to take "for an helmet the hope of salvation," when they are shaken in mind at the sight of prosperous ungodliness. The grand lesson intended to be inculcated is worked out in each of the two stanzas of which the body of the psalm consists. In the first it is worked out partially, in the second more perfectly. The psalmist has been himself perplexed by the problem to which he summons the attention of the world. Like Asaph, in Ps. lxxiii., he has been shaken in mind by seeing vile men rich, powerful, prosperous. Reflecting on that sight, the first consideration impressed on his mind is the vanity of riches. These men trust in their wealth. . . . Yet, after all, how helpless are they! . . . Death prevails over all. . . . The redemption of a man's life is too precious to be accomplished with silver and gold. The attempt is vain. It must be let alone, and cease for ever. Thus the psalmist is conducted to the sentence with which the first stanza is wound up: "*Man that is in honour hath no continuance; he is become like to the beasts that are destroyed.*" The reflection is a salutary one; . . . but, after all, it is not a bright or consolatory one. There is no glory of heavenly hope upon it. Heathen moralists were as familiar with it as the psalmist. . . . The verses that follow lift us up beyond these clouds into a serener air. The sentence into which the argument of the first stanza was gathered up is set down a second time at the close of the psalm. But this time with an important variation. Here it is the man "that hath no understanding" who is compared to the beasts that are destroyed. We are thus reminded that there are some who, by God's grace, have understanding: men who "fear the Lord, which is wisdom, and depart from evil, which is understanding." . . . They do not perish like the beasts, but are taken up into God's presence, to dwell there like angels. What is thus taught by implication in the refrain is set forth explicitly in the body of the stanza. Two declarations claim special attention. After describing the death of the ungodly as their being "driven by the stern shepherd, Death, into the unseen world," as sheep are driven unwillingly into a pen, he declares his belief that a day is coming—a bright morning—in which the saints shall have dominion (ver. 14); an announcement which carries forward the mind to the morning of the resurrection, when "the saints shall judge the world," 1 Cor. vi. 2. Then, coming home to his own case, he makes profession of his hope in words of strong assurance: "*God will redeem my soul from the power of the unseen world; for he shall take me.*" The former part of this profession of the psalmist's faith is best illustrated by the parallel text in Hosea: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave" (*i.e.* "I will redeem them from the power of the unseen world:" the words in the original are the same as in the psalm); "I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" Hos. xiii. 14. The believer has faith in God that, when he dies, he shall not be shut up in darkness, but shall be received into the presence of God, and be raised up in glory at the last day. That victory over death, which the worldling's wealth cannot purchase for his dearest friend, is made sure to every one who puts his trust in God. The words that follow, "for he shall take me," correspond to those of Asaph, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards take me to glory;" and, in both places, there is an allusion to the language of the sacred history in relating the translation of Enoch: "He was not, for God took him," Gen. v. 24. Not that Asaph or the writer of Ps. xlix. expected to be translated like Enoch; but the "taking up" of the antediluvian saint suggested to their minds a world of precious truth respecting the future life, and strengthened in their hearts the hope of eternal glory in the presence of God. We have before us, therefore, a clear and strong declaration of hope; for, after all, what more can the believer say even now? The highest attainment our faith can reach, in the

prospect of dissolution, is to lay hold on the promise of Christ and say, "Thou wilt come and receive me to thyself, so that where thou art, there I shall be also;" and what is this but to repeat the profession of hope that is embedded in Ps. xlix.?—*Binnie.*

8. *The redemption of their soul is precious.* If riches are capable of many good uses, as the Bible admits, so in a multitude of cases they are utterly powerless. They cannot buy talent, or any excellence of mind or heart. They cannot give a good constitution, nor prolong life for a day. They rather increase than diminish fears. "The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." They cannot quiet an uneasy conscience. They cannot cool a fever or drive away a chill. They cannot soothe a pain in the head or an ache in the heart. Towards one's salvation they can contribute nothing whatever. Nor can they aid our kin or our friends more than they can ourselves. *Tholuck:* "A rich man may buy much with his money—goods of every kind, pleasures, honours; but he cannot buy eternal life."—*Plumer.*

15. *He shall receive me.* He shall take me. This short half-verse is, as Böttcher remarks, the more weighty, from its very shortness. The same expression occurs again, Ps. lxxiii. 24: "Thou shalt take me," the original of both being, Gen. v. 24, where it is used of the translation of Enoch, "He was not, for God *took* him." We have, then, in this passage again (comp. Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15) the strong hope of eternal life with God, if not the hope of a resurrection. In the preceding verse, in the very midst of the gloomy picture which he draws of the end of the ungodly, there breaks forth one morning-ray of light, the bright anticipation of the final triumph of the good over the evil. This is the inextinguishable hope which animates the church of the Old Testament as well as that of the New. Righteousness *shall* eventually, must in its very nature, reign upon the earth. The wicked shall find their end in Sheôl (see Ps. ix. 17), and the righteous shall trample on their graves. This, and not more than this, seems to have been the meaning originally of the psalmist in the words, "And the righteous have dominion over them in the morning." But now that he comes to speak of himself, and his own personal relation to God, he rises into a higher strain. He who knows and loves God has the life of God, and can never perish. That life must survive even the shock of death. "God," says the psalmist, "shall redeem my soul from the hand of Hades, for he shall take me," as he took Enoch, and as he took Elijah, to himself. We are not, of course, to suppose that the sacred poet himself expected to be taken up alive to heaven; but those great facts of former ages were God's witnesses to man of his immortality, and of the reality of a life with him beyond this world. It is a hope based on facts like these which here shines forth. It is a hope, not a revealed certainty. It rests on no distinct promise; it has not assumed the definite form of a doctrine. But it was enough to raise, to cheer, to encourage those who saw ungodliness prospering in this world. The end of the wicked, after all, was a thick darkness which had never been penetrated; the end of the righteous, life with God. —*Perowne.*

18. *While he lived he blessed his soul.* The death which, according to ver. 17, deprives the ungodly of all his glorious privileges, is to be thought of, according to the preceding context, as near at *hand.* In ver. 18 the reason is given why God does not permit the glory of the wicked to follow him, why it comes to so sudden and complete an end. His whole life was set on enjoyment; he has already enjoyed enough, already has he treated himself luxuriously enough, and he cannot complain if he should now come to want. We may compare Lu. xvi. 25, a passage resting upon ours, and serving as a commentary to it: "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." On this, for he blesses his soul in his life, is to be compared the address of the rich man to his soul, Lu. xii. 19.—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM L.

Title. The prepositional prefix rendered "*of*" in the present superscription is the same (ל) that is given as "*for*" in that of the preceding psalm. The same considerations are therefore here applicable, and incline us to conclude that the psalms which bear the name of Asaph were written by him. Asaph is frequently mentioned in the

historical books as the chief, or one of the chiefs, of the choirs of Israel in the time of David. The psalms ascribed to him are twelve (l.; lxxiii.–lxxxiii.). Two of these, however (lxxiv. lxxix.), could not have been written by him or in his time, as their contents evidently assign them to the period of the captivity. The subject of Asaph's psalms are doctrinal or preceptive: their style, though less sweet than that of David, is much more vehement, and little inferior to the grandest parts of the prophecies of Isaiah and Habakkuk. The present psalm in particular is characterized by a very deep strain of thought and lofty tone of sentiment.—*Kitto.*

If David is, without controversy, the prince of the psalmists, Asaph stands next to him in honour. The psalms in which the Levites sang praise to the Lord in the days of Hezekiah are called "the words of David and of *Asaph the seer*," 2 Chr. xxix. 31. The emphatic manner in which the prophetic title is here annexed to Asaph's name, suggests that he was favoured with a larger measure of the prophetical spirit than any of the Levitical prophets who were his contemporaries. The facts known respecting him are briefly told. He was a Levite, of the family of Gershon. He was one of the three presidents of the Levitical singers, standing at Heman's right hand, as Ethan-Jeduthun did at his left. His four sons presided, under him, over four companies. Their descendants continued to minister in the service of song as long as the first temple stood, and are mentioned in this connection in the histories of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, 2 Chr. xx. 14; xxix. 13. They mustered, to the number of 128, among the exiles who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, and are found ministering in the second temple before the cessation of prophecy. When Zerubbabel and Jeshua laid the foundation of the house, amidst the tears and shoutings of the remnant who had returned, it was the sons of Asaph who "praised the Lord with cymbals, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel," Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xi. 22.

There must have been several members of this family who inherited at once their father's name and his gift of minstrelsy; for of the twelve Asaph-psalms, several are of a date long subsequent to David's reign. It deserves to be noticed, however, as confirmatory of the testimony of the superscriptions in prefixing the name to all the twelve, that they constitute a class by themselves. They are the following: Ps. l., and Ps. lxxiii. to lxxxiii. inclusive. Dr. Delitzsch of Erlangen, who was the first to call attention to the peculiarities which characterize these Asaph-psalms, remarks, among other things, that "they are distinguished from the Korahite psalms by their prophetical and judicial character. Like the prophetical books, they frequently introduce God as the speaker. After the manner of the prophets, they contain lengthened representations of God as the Judge of all, as well as somewhat lengthened discourses spoken by him in that character, Ps. l. lxxv. lxxxii. Besides their predictive aspect, the Asaph-psalms present a historical aspect also, frequently commemorating facts pertaining to the ancient times; and one of them, the seventy-eighth, is altogether devoted to holding forth the ancient history of the nation as a mirror for the present generation to look into. The consecutive perusal of the twelve Asaph-psalms brings to light this other curious peculiarity, that Joseph, and the tribes descended from him, are mentioned more frequently in them than in any other." The reader may easily verify this last remark by turning to Ps. lxxvii. 15; lxxviii. 9, 67; lxxx. 1, 2; lxxxi. 5.

Of the Asaph-psalms which we have reason to suppose were written by David's illustrious contemporary himself, three may be named as worthy of special notice. The seventy-eighth claims notice as one of the earliest of the great historical odes. It recapitulates the history of the chosen people from the exodus till the reign of David; and it comes behind no psalm of its class for depth of insight into the treasures of instruction which the Spirit of God has stored up in the sacred history for the edification of all generations. Ps. lxxiii. is another of Asaph's; and it is one for which God's people will never cease to cherish his memory. It is a kind of lyrical epitome of the book of Job. It delineates the trial and triumph of grace in a believer, whose faith, after staggering at the sight of prosperous wickedness, recovers on observing the sudden destruction of

the ungodly, and especially on recollecting (what he feels he ought never to have forgotten) that the chief end and felicity of man is, after all, to be found in God—not in worldly prosperity, but in the participation of God's favour.

Ps. l. is from the same pen. It is remarkable for this, that although written at the time when the Levitical ritual was celebrated with its utmost splendour, and by a Levite, whose office called him to act a principal part in some of its most splendid services, it contains as energetic a protest as the apostle Paul ever uttered, against the imagination that ceremonies are in themselves well-pleasing to God. It preaches, from the midst of the ritual magnificence of the age of David and Solomon, the very doctrine which our blessed Lord unfolded to the astonished woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, that God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. What could be plainer or bolder than these words (ver. 7–12)? These last (ver. 14, 15) are golden sentences! The hecatombs that Solomon and the congregation offered at the dedication of the house were, doubtless, acceptable in God's sight; but they owed their acceptance to the joyful faith and thankfulness that animated the offerers—to their humble reverence and unreserved devotion to the God of Israel. And there is not a poor troubled one on earth this day, there is not a soul crushed beneath a load of sorrow, in whom, if he will but importunately call on God, "making known to him his requests with thanksgiving," Phil. iv. 6, God will not take a higher delight than he did in the costly and magnificent offering of the king.—*Binnie.*

8. *Not because of thy sacrifices, &c.* The reason for this act of judgment is given. First, negatively (*positively*, ver. 14, 15). It is not because the people had neglected the externals of the law, or had forgotten to offer the sacrifices appointed by the law. They had brought them; but they had brought them as if the act were everything, and as if the meaning of the act, and the spirit in which it was done, were nothing. But God demands no service for its own sake, but only as the expression of an obedient will. A thankful heart is more than all burnt-offerings. The prophets are full of the like sentiments (Isa. i. 12; lviii.; lxvi. 3; Mic. vi. 6-8; Hos. vi. 6). And so deep-rooted was this tendency in the people to exaggerate the importance of the dead work, to bring the sacrifice of the dumb animal instead of the sacrifice of the heart, that Jeremiah carries the opposition between sacrifices and obedience even to the extreme of a paradox (Jer. vii. 22, 23).—*Perowne.*

23. *Whoso offereth praise, &c.* The English version, with its rendering, "*offereth* praise," loses sight of the distinct reference to the Mosaic sacrifices, which are not indeed absolutely superseded—the time had not yet come for this—but are put in their true place. The very great prominence again given to thanksgiving is worthy of our careful notice. There is no duty so commonly forgotten. God showers down his benefits upon us with both hands, large and free, and we receive them as a matter of course, and never consider whose love has bestowed them; and thus in our unthankfulness we rob God of his honour.

Further, as thanksgiving is thus dwelt upon because it is so commonly forgotten, so it is also put as the sum of religion, because it, in fact, includes all else. Faith, and prayer, and self-denial, and the endurance of the cross, and all holy exercises are, as Calvin observes, comprised in this one grace. For it is by faith only that we are sensible of God's goodness; therefore he who is truly of a thankful spirit has faith; he who is thankful triumphs over his earthly trials; he who is thankful is accomplishing man's highest end, inasmuch as in all things he gives glory to God. The instruction of the psalm abides: it has not lost its force. The sacraments and ordinances of the Christian church may become to us what sacrifice and offering were to the Jews, a mere *opus operatum;* a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet have no love; a man may be punctual in his attendance at all holy ordinances, and yet cherish iniquity in his heart, and upon occasion secretly practise it. Hence the psalm is truly prophetical, that is, universal in its character. It deals with "the sinners and the hypocrites in Zion;" but it reaches to all men in all places to the end of time.—*Perowne.*

This is the third time that the psalmist has inculcated the truth, that the most acceptable sacrifice in God's sight is praise, by which we express to

him the gratitude of our hearts for his blessings. The repetition is not a needless one, and that on two accounts. In the first place there is nothing with which we are more frequently chargeable than forgetfulness of the benefits of the Lord. Scarcely one out of a thousand attracts our notice; and if it does it is only slightly, and, as it were, in passing. And, secondly, we do not assign that importance to the duty of praise which it deserves. We are apt to neglect it as something trivial, and altogether commonplace; whereas it constitutes the chief exercise of godliness, in which God would have us to be engaged during the whole of our life. In the words before us the sacrifice of praise is asserted to form the true and proper worship of God. The words, *will glorify me*, imply that God is then truly and properly worshipped, and the glory which he requires yielded to him, when his goodness is celebrated with a sincere and grateful heart; but that all the other sacrifices to which hypocrites attach such importance are worthless in his estimation, and no part whatsoever of his worship. Under the word *praise*, however, is comprehended, as I have already noticed, both faith and prayer. There must be an experience of the goodness of the Lord before our mouths can be opened to praise him for it, and this goodness can only be experienced by faith. Hence it follows that the whole of spiritual worship is comprehended under what is either presupposed in the exercise of faith, or flows from it.—*Calvin.*

PSALM LI.

The psalms which David wrote on occasion of his great fall have gone home to the hearts of the best and holiest men that ever walked the earth. No sermon of Augustine's betrays more tender emotion, more deep and thrilling sympathy with his subject, than the one he preached to the people of Carthage on Ps. li. Nothing can well be plainer than that psalms which for ages have thus found their way to men's hearts, must have come from the heart.

One who would appreciate the character of the psalmist must remember that he was a man of prodigious energy. What he did, he did with his might. It is to be remembered, moreover, that he was a king, an oriental king, to whom law and universal custom permitted polygamy, and who was thus put in the way of being tempted by the foul sin which was the death of his domestic peace. Nor ought it to be forgotten that the sacred history has narrated David's fall with a judicial severity full of the terror of the Lord. The chapter which records his offence sets down every hateful feature in it with an unextenuating, inexorable circumstantiality, unparalleled in all biography, and, to a thoughtful reader, suggestive of the indictment that might be preferred against a criminal at the bar of the Most High. These considerations are not adduced to cloak David's transgression. Its enormity is undeniable, and is denied by none. He sank to a depth of guilt into which few of God's children have ever been suffered to fall. It is to be remarked, however, that this very fact contributed to fit him to be the psalmist of God's Israel. It was not in spite of his fall, but because of it, that God made choice of him to be the spokesman of the church in penitential song. The church is not a company of angels, but of ransomed men; of men who were sinners, who are often sinning still. David well knew that the record of his fall and his forgiveness would furnish to sin-stricken souls in after-times a strength of encouragement which nothing else could yield. In crying for mercy, this was the plea he urged, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;—then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (ver. 12, 13). Being forgiven, he felt, like the converted persecutor of the church, that his God had furnished in him "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." How wonderfully has this anticipation been realized! It is a merciful provision that, however profound may be the depths into which a man may be cast by his sins, he finds that the psalmist has been there before him, and has furnished him with words in which "out of the depths" he may cry to the Lord. There is not a poor publican in all God's temple who, as he smites on his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," does not find, on turning to the book of Psalms, that the mercy of God has there provided for him songs that express every feeling of his convicted soul—songs, too, originally written by as great a sinner as himself, in the agony of his repentance. Till the judgment-day it will never be known

how many souls, who would otherwise have cast themselves down in despair, have been encouraged by David's example, and assisted by his psalms, to embrace the promise and to hope in the mercy of God.—*Binnie.*

5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity,* &c. See the supplementary note under Rom. v. 12–19, where the author's views on the imputation of sin are canvassed. Hengstenberg in his notes on this verse justly remarks—"Allusions to the doctrine of a hereditary corruption are to be found even in the oldest portions of revelation. The account of Adam's fall can be understood in its full compass only if in it the whole human race fell, which can no otherwise be conceived than on the supposition of the propagation of sin by generation. That Adam's fall is the fall of the human family, is implied in the *punishment,* which affects not the individual, but the entire race. Everything which stands immediately connected with the account of the fall, the narrative of Cain's fratricide, &c., is inexplicable, if we limit the fall merely to the individual Adam, and there is a breaking down of the bridge formed in the generation between him and his posterity, to which express allusion is made in Gen. v. 3, 'And Adam begot like him and after his image' (in every respect, and hence also in reference to sin, which had now become a property of his nature). The whole subsequent relation is designed to show how fruitfully the principle of sin implanted in nature through Adam developed itself. According to Gen. viii. 21, the thoughts and imaginations of the heart of man are only evil from his youth."

PSALM LII.

8. *But I am like a green olive-tree,* &c. We have seen that David was enabled by the exercise of faith to look down upon the worldly grandeur of Doeg with a holy contempt; and now we find him rising superior to all that was presently afflictive in his own condition. Though to appearance he more resembled the withered trunk of a tree which rots upon the ground, he compares himself, in the confidence of coming prosperity, to a green olive. I need not say that the destruction of Doeg could only communicate comfort to his mind, in the way of convincing him that God was the avenging judge of human cruelty, and leading him to infer that, as he had punished his wrongs, so he would advance him to renewed measures of prosperity. From his language it appears that he could conceive of no higher felicity in his condition than being admitted amongst the number of the worshippers of God, and engaging in the exercises of devotion. This was characteristic of his spirit. We have already had occasion to see that he felt his banishment from the sanctuary of God more keenly than separation from his consort, the loss of worldly substance, or the dangers and hardships of the wilderness. The idea of an allusion being here made by way of contrast to Doeg, who came to the tabernacle of the Lord merely as a spy, and under hypocritical pretexts, is strained and far-fetched. It is more natural to suppose that David distinguishes himself from all his enemies, without exception, intimating that though he was presently removed from the tabernacle, he would soon be restored to it; and that they who boasted of possessing, or rather monopolizing, the house of God, would be rooted out of it with disgrace. And here let us engrave the useful lesson upon our hearts, that we should consider it the great end of our existence to be found numbered amongst the worshippers of God; and that we should avail ourselves of the inestimable privilege of the stated assemblies of the church, which are necessary helps to our infirmity, and means of mutual excitement and encouragement. By these, and our common sacraments, the Lord, who is one God, and who designed that we should be one in him, is training us up together in the hope of eternal life, and in the united celebration of his holy name. Let us learn with David to prefer a place in the house of God to all the lying vanities of this world. He adds the reason why he should be like the green olive-tree—*because he hoped in the goodness of God;* for the causal particle appears to be understood. And in this he adverts to the contrast between him and his enemies. They might flourish for a time, spread their branches far and wide, and shoot themselves up to a gigantic stature, but would speedily wither away, because they had no root in the goodness of God; whereas he was certain to derive from this source ever renewed supplies of sap and vigour. As the term of his earthly trials might be protracted, and there was a danger that he

might sink under their long continuance, unless his confidence should extend itself far into futurity, he declares expressly that he would not presume to prescribe times to God, and that his hopes were stretched into eternity. It followed that he surrendered himself entirely to God in all that regarded his life or his death. The passage puts us in possession of the grand distinction between the genuine children of God and those who are hypocrites. They are to be found together in the church, as the wheat is mingled with the chaff on the same threshing-floor; but the one class abides for ever in the steadfastness of a well-founded hope, while the other is driven away in the vanity of its false confidences.—*Calvin.*

PSALM LIII.

The name *Jehovah* is not used at all in the psalm before us, but occurs four times in Ps. xiv., and *Elohim* thrice. This difference seems to mark Ps. liii. as the later composition, in which the writer aimed at an external uniformity, which did not occur to him at first. This is a much more natural supposition than that he afterwards varied what was uniform at first. The attempts which have been made to account still more particularly for the use of the divine names in these two psalms have entirely failed.—*Alexander.*

How is this diverse use of the divine names to be accounted for? A century has not yet elapsed since the subject first attracted the study of the learned, little more than twenty years since the facts were accurately noted, yet theories not a few have already been elaborated, some feasible, others not feasible at all. The one best known in this country is associated with the name of Dr. Colenso. It is very simple. He has found out that the name which translators, ancient and modern, have been accustomed reverently to veil under the more general title LORD, was *invented*, —say by the prophet Samuel,—shortly before David came to the throne, and that all the earlier Scriptures in which it occurs are spurious or hopelessly interpolated! The older name *Elohim* continued in use, however, for some time, and accordingly prevails in some of the psalms. After a while it gave place entirely to the newer word. Thus the whole difficulty is resolved into an affair of chronology; the *Elohim* psalms are the earlier, the others are the later. A very simple theory, if the facts would only accommodate themselves to it. However, they absolutely refuse to do so. Two may be named out of the hundreds that are available. The song of Deborah in the book of Judges, which is accounted genuine by all critics of every school, celebrates the praises of God by his name *Jehovah;* whereas Ps. lxviii., written long after, and with marked allusions to Deborah's song, uses the other and less sacred title. Moreover, Dr. Colenso's theory obliges him to make some later psalmist, and not David, the writer of Ps. li. A theory which involves such an obligation is self-condemned.

Nevertheless there must be *some* ground for the usage in question. No one who believes in the inspiration of the psalmists can doubt that there must be some wise reason for it. The appropriate use of the divine names in *prayer* is an excellent aid to faith, helping the supplicant "to take encouragement in prayer from God only;" it is no less excellent, we may be sure, in the kindred exercise of *praise.* It is certain that the psalmists did not vary their usage by accident. It could not be by accident that David, after having given forth Ps. xiv. as a Jehovah-psalm, in giving forth a second edition of it substituted the name Elohim. Yet he has done this in Ps. liii. And the same remark applies to Ps. lxx. in relation to the closing verses of Ps. xl. In all this there must have been some object; but what the precise object was it is hard to tell. None of the explanations yet given will solve the whole problem. A partial solution is, however, to be found in the different import of the divine names. *Elohim* is the more general designation, being occasionally applied to angels, to magistrates, to heathen deities; *Jehovah* is the special and peculiar designation expressing God's covenant relation to his own Israel, and is absolutely incommunicable. This obvious diversity of import goes a good way towards explaining the remarkable manner in which the use of the names is varied throughout all the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus it explains the exclusive employment of *Elohim* in Ecclesiastes, a book which, dealing with the problems lying on the border-ground between natural and revealed religion, could not so fitly use the more sacred name. It explains the

repeated employment of the same title in Ps. xiv., although it is a Jehovah-psalm. If it does not perfectly explain the existence of a whole book of Elohim-psalms, it at least furnishes a valuable contribution towards the solution of the difficulty.—*Binnie.*

5. *There were they in great fear where no fear was.* The *rebels* who rose up against David's authority, chiefly because they hated his religion, and were instigated by the spirit of persecution, proved on trial very cowardly; for no doubt God was pleased to impress terror on their hearts when there was no adequate danger. Thus the army of Absalom, which encamped against David, was easily routed; numbers fell in the forests, and being left unburied, their bones were scattered; and because God despised the impotent rage of this abandoned party, his servant easily put them to confusion. They were a sort of type of the Jewish persecutors of Christ and his disciples.—*Scott.*

PSALM LIV.

3. *Strangers.* The Chaldee, instead of זרים, strangers, reads זדים, proud, which Luther also follows. This reading has partly proceeded from an unseasonable comparison of the parallel passage, Ps. lxxxvi. 14, in which זרים is intentionally changed into זדים, and partly from the difficulty which *strangers* presents, when compared with the superscription, according to which the enemies are domestic ones. This difficulty is legitimately removed by the remark, that David here figuratively designates his countrymen as strangers, because they who were united with him by so many ties, his "friends," and his "brethren," according to the law of God, in their behaviour toward him were not different from strangers. Precisely the same figurative representation occurs also in Ps. cxx. 5, where the psalmist, heavily oppressed by his countrymen, complains that he dwelt in Mesech and Kedar, heathenish tribes, *q.d.* among heathens and Turks. Analogous also are the numerous passages in which Israelites either in general are described as aliens or heathens, or are coupled with the name of a particular outlandish people, in order to mark their *degeneracy* and *ungodliness.* The transition to the figurative use of זרים was the more easy, as it almost invariably carries the related idea of *hostile*, comp. Gesen. *Thes.*, who is so candid as to admit here this figurative use.—*Hengstenberg.*

4. *Behold! God is mine helper.* Such language as this may show us that David did not direct his prayers at random into the air, but offered them in the exercise of a lively faith. There is much force in the demonstrative adverb. He points as it were with the finger, to that God who stood at his side to defend him; and was not this an amazing illustration of the power with which faith can surmount all obstacles, and glance in a moment from the depths of despair to the very throne of God? He was a fugitive amongst the dens of the earth, and even there in hazard of his life—how then could he speak of God as being near to him? He was pressed down to the very mouth of the grave; and how could he recognize the gracious presence of God? He was trembling in the momentary expectation of being destroyed; and how is it possible that he can triumph in the certain hope that divine help will presently be extended to him? In numbering God amongst his defenders, we must not suppose that he assigns him a mere common rank amongst the men who supported his cause, which would have been highly derogatory to his glory. He means that God took part with those, such as Jonathan and others, who were interested in his welfare. These might be few in number, possessed of little power, and cast down with fears; but he believed that, under the guidance and protection of the Almighty, they would prove superior to his enemies; or perhaps we may view him as referring in the words to his complete destitution of all human defenders, and asserting that the help of God would abundantly compensate for all.—*Calvin.*

7. *Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* When our cause is the cause of God, and there is full sympathy with him in the triumph of right, this language is justified. Both private parties, however, and nations are in some danger, when they suppose their circumstances to be analogous with those of David. Prof. Alexander's illustration here is therefore in better taste than that of our author. "*Mine eye has looked or gazed*, with an implication of delight, or at least of acquiescence, which is commonly conveyed by this construction. This kind of satisfaction in the execution of God's threat-

enings is sinful only when combined with selfish malignity. Apart from this corrupt admixture, it is inseparable from conformity of will and coincidence of judgment with God. The same kind and degree of acquiescence which is felt by holy angels in heaven may surely be expressed by saints on earth, especially in their collective capacity as a church, in whose name the psalmist is here speaking, and not merely in his own or that of any other individual."

PSALM LV.

8. *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.* Such was the language of David—and it may be the language of any other good man in the depth of distress. But is it allowable and proper? There is no perfection here; and there is nothing concerning which we should indulge more tenderness of censure than hasty expressions uttered under the pressure of pain or grief. Perhaps it was to prevent our severity here that the cases of Job and Jeremiah are recorded, both of whom, though eminent in piety, cursed the day of their birth. The Scripture is not harsh upon them; and it is observable, that when James refers to one of these bitterly complaining sufferers, he only says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." They who have never been in a state of peculiar distress know little of the feelings of human nature under it. But there are others who can respond to the invitation of sympathy, "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!" And the Father of mercies knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. We are not required to choose suffering for its own sake; or to be indifferent to ease and deliverance. Our Saviour himself had not that fortitude which mocks at pain; but that which felt deeply; and yet submitted. With strong cryings and tears he prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." But what allows of excuse, truth does not require us to commend. It was his infirmity that induced David to long for death, to hasten his escape from the stormy wind and tempest; and an old writer tells us it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to *bear* his trials, than for the wings of a dove to *flee* from them.—*Jay.*

12-15. *It was not an enemy,* &c. Ahithophel's treachery was peculiarly distressing to David; and it was the more painful for being wholly unsuspected. So far from having been an avowed enemy who now took occasion to reproach him and to exult in his calamities, or menace his life, Ahithophel had been David's counsellor and bosom friend, and had been treated by him as an equal, or as one of his own rank; he had also been his chosen and pleasing companion in the exercise of religion and in pious conversation. Yet this very man, without any affront or previous quarrel, became an apostate and a traitor; and gave Absalom the most malicious and infernal counsel imaginable!—Thus Christ was betrayed by one whom he had honoured as a companion, a disciple, and an apostle; who resembled Ahithophel in his crimes and in his doom: for both were speedily overtaken by divine vengeance in the same dreadful manner. This was foretold by David concerning Ahithophel, and by Jesus concerning Judas; for the words are in the future, and more naturally signify a prediction than an imprecation.—"The sudden destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, for stirring up rebellion against Moses and Aaron, 'went down alive into the pit,' seems here alluded to, as the grand representation of the manner in which the bottomless pit shall one day shut her mouth for ever upon all the impenitent enemies of the true King of Israel and the great High-priest of our profession" (Horne).—*Scott.*

PSALM LVI.

According to the inscription, composed when David was detained in Gath by the Philistines. But on neither occasion when he visited Gath does the history inform us of any such detention, 1 Sam. xxi. xxvii. xxix. Hengstenberg, indeed, and Delitzsch suppose that some seizure or imprisonment is implied in the words he "feigned himself mad *in their hands;*" and the expression at the beginning of chap. xxii., "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam," may imply that he had been subjected to some confinement. Hupfeld concludes from the absence of anything in the history corresponding to the title of the psalm, that the title is not to be trusted. Yet it is perhaps more likely on this very account that

it rests upon some ancient tradition. A modern compiler would have endeavoured to make the title square better with the history.—*Perowne.*

Only from the poet himself could such a poetical superscription be expected; it was precisely David's custom to prefix such emblematical superscriptions to his psalms; and every one of the very peculiar words is found again in the Davidic psalms—*the dove* in Ps. lv., which, certainly not by accident, our psalm immediately follows—the superscription was to derive its explanation from it,—*the being dumb* in Ps. lviii., *the far-dwelling* in Ps. lxv., *the secret* in Ps. xvi.—The second part of the superscription is to be regarded as an explanation of the first part. The Philistines are the "far-dwelling;" David seized by them, "the dumb dove." The history is given in 1 Sam. xxi. David fled, as he no longer found security in his fatherland, to the Philistines. Alone there he waited for his new danger. He, the conqueror of Goliath, was conducted as a formidable enemy before the king, and only by an artifice delivered his life.—*Hengstenberg.*

4. *In God I will praise his word.* We must understand by the word of God, all his promises, which had hitherto been given to the psalmist through the law (comp. Ps. cxix. 25), through Samuel, through internal communications during his earlier history. This word of God, and God himself, who had therein promised to be his God, the psalmist extols as his firm shield, which is sufficient to protect him against the whole world. *John Arnd:* "As Saul and the potentates of this world boast of their hosts of war, their thousands of men, and their munition, I will glory in God's word and promise, which are my warlike force, my fortress, and support; let them trust in their chariots and waggons, we shall think of the name of the Lord." The psalmist calls man flesh by way of contempt, because where there is corporeity there is no real strength,—comp. Is. xxxi. 3, "The Egyptians are men and not God, their horses are flesh and not spirit;" chap. xl. 6, *John Arnd:* "He sets against each other the mighty God and impotent flesh, which is as grass and as the flower of the field."—*Hengstenberg.*

8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* In the Roman tombs are found small bottles (usually called *lachrymatories*) of glass or pottery, but most commonly glass, and of various forms, but generally with long narrow necks. These are commonly supposed to have contained tears shed by the surviving friends of the deceased, and to have been deposited in the sepulchres as memorials of affection and distress. We might very well suppose that the present text alludes to such a custom; and it would therefore imply that it existed very anciently in the East, and particularly among the Hebrews. It must not, however, be concealed that the use assigned to these phials is a modern conjecture, and that there is no trace of such a custom in ancient writings or sculptures; whence Shoëfflin, Paciaudi, and others, were rather led to conclude that these phials were intended to contain the perfumes used in sprinkling the funeral pile. This is not the place to discuss such a question; but we may add that the representation of one or two eyes which is observed upon some of these vessels, is a circumstance in favour of the common opinion. Whatever be concluded on this point, we have little doubt that the psalmist does refer to some custom then existing of putting tears in small bottles, particularly as there are still some traces of such a usage in the East. Thus, in the annual lamentations of the Persians for the slaughtered sons of Ali, their tears are copiously excited by passionate discourses and tragical recitations. When at the height of their grief, a priest sometimes goes round to each person and collects the tears with a piece of cotton, from which he presses them into a bottle, preserving them with the greatest care. This seems a striking illustration of the present text, which takes its allusion from one person putting the tears of another into a bottle. The Persians believe that there is a peculiar virtue in the tears shed on the occasion mentioned; so that persons at the point of death have revived when a drop has been administered to them. This is the reason why they are so carefully collected.—*Pictorial Bible.*

God will not be unmindful of our tears and sorrows. Ono! He puts them in his bottle. He registers them in his book. Trials will bring tears. "But," says Arnd, "here lies a powerful consolation, that God gathers up such tears, and puts them in his bottle, just as one would pour precious wine into a flagon, so precious and dear are such

tears before God, and God lays them up as a treasure in the heavens; and if we think that all such tears are lost, lo! God hath preserved them for us a treasure in the heavens, with which we shall be richly consoled in that day," Ps. cxxvi. 5. *Calvin:* "We may surely believe that if God bestows such honour upon the tears of his saints, he must number every drop of their blood. Tyrants may burn their flesh and their bones, but the blood remains to cry aloud for vengeance; and intervening ages can never erase what has been written in the register of God's remembrance."—*Plumer.*

PSALM LVII.

Al-taschith. Few expressions in the Psalter have proved so perplexing as the words *Al-taschith*, i.e. *Destroy not*, which occur in the superscriptions of the three Davidic psalms lvii. lviii. lix., and also in that of Ps. lxxv. The one main feature common to these four particular psalms is that they all imprecate or foretell divine destruction upon the wicked. The "destroy not" cannot therefore well be any part of a prayer to God to spare: it is more probably part of some maxim which David had laid down for himself to observe that he would not take the work of destruction into his own hands, but would await the divine vengeance that must in due time overtake his enemies. It is easily conceivable that some unrecorded incident in David's life may have originally suggested these words, which afterwards continually recurred to his thoughts as a sort of motto for his behaviour, and which, in the spirit of simple faith, we might almost say of playfulness, he perpetuated in the superscriptions of his psalms, as a testimony that his utterances of woe against his persecutors arose from no feelings of private malice or hatred. What, for example, if in one of the earlier interviews in which Jonathan warned David of his father's purpose to kill him, he should have used words similar to those he is related to have used in 1 Sam. xx. 15, and should have said, "Destroy not thou, my father, even though thou believe that God will one day destroy him for thy sake?" What if the words, "destroy not," with some such import as this, should have been once employed as a watchword between Jonathan and David? These are of course merely imaginary instances of the numberless ways in which the words "destroy not," with a particular meaning and particular associations attached, might by some trivial circumstance be indelibly impressed upon David's mind. And it may be observed that these very words were repeated by David to Abishai, when on a subsequent occasion the latter wished to kill Saul, whom they had discovered by night unguarded and asleep in his camp in the wilderness of Ziph.—*Thrupp.*

Ps. lvii. may be referred to as exemplifying a somewhat different aspect of the psalmist's exercise of soul during these years of peril and unrest. We still hear in it a cry for mercy and an appeal to the just judgment of God, but the thing that principally strikes a thoughtful reader is the unwavering confidence expressed in the divine faithfulness. David's faith, soaring above the clouds and tempest, bathes itself in the light of God's countenance.—"I will praise thee among the peoples; I will sing psalms unto thee among the nations." These are remarkable words. They show that David from his early days was filled with the presentiment that he was inditing songs in which not Israel only, but the Gentiles, far and near, would one day praise the God of Abraham. How remarkably has the anticipation been fulfilled! David now "sings to God among the nations," in this very psalm which so many nations have already learned to use.—*Binnie.*

8. *I myself will awake early.* Strictly translated, this clause contains a bold but beautiful poetical conception, that of awakening the dawn instead of being awakened by it, in other words, preventing or anticipating it by early praises. In like manner Ovid says the crowing of the cock *evocat auroram.* We thus obtain the same sense in a far more striking form than is expressed by the inexact and prosaic version, *I will awake early.* The intransitive sense given to the verb and the adverbial sense given to the noun are both without sufficient authority in usage. From this verse some have inferred that the psalm was expressly designed to be an even-song; but he does not say, I will do thus to-morrow. The meaning is rather that he will do it daily. The summons to the harp and lyre may be understood as implying that they have long slept without occasion for such praise as they are now to utter.—*Alexander.*

9. *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* These intimations of mercy in store for the Gentiles do not lie quite on the surface of the early Scriptures; and it is likely that in every generation there would be many among the children of Israel who overlooked them, and, like the Pharisees, took occasion from the covenant with Abraham to despise the Gentiles, instead of learning from it to take an affectionate and prayerful interest in them, and to look forward in hope to a time when they should be enrolled among the fearers of the Lord. But we must not do the Old Testament church the injustice of supposing that all its members were so blind and carnal. Here, as in so many other particulars, the psalms enable us to vindicate the faith of the ancient saints. They show that the intimations we have pointed out were neither overlooked nor forgotten. The church's *missionary* work, it is true, did not begin under the former dispensation; nor indeed did it begin till the day of Pentecost; for even Christ himself was not sent save to the house of Israel. Till the full time came for the great Sacrifice to be offered up and the Comforter to be sent forth, there was no commission given to the church to go into all nations, preaching repentance and the remission of sins. The Hebrew church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society. But it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim, "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing unto thee among the nations," Ps. lvii. 9. In the same spirit a later psalmist summons the church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord's mighty acts: "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the peoples," Ps. cv. 1. The full import of this class of texts is often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples;* everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms, in particular, the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction, the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of inspired psalmody, did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world-embracing hopes. — *Binnie.*

11. *Be thou exalted, O God.* The same word which he had used, ver. 5, to sum up his prayers in, he here uses again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in; "Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it thyself, *be thou exalted, O God.* In the praises of the church triumphant, thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant, thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both, Neh. ix. 5, and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself *above the heavens,* and *above all the earth: Father, glorify thine own name: thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again."—Henry.*

PSALM LVIII.

3. *The wicked are estranged from the womb.* What makes human corruption so dreadful is the fact of its growing out of original sin, and consequently it has its root in the inmost depths of the heart. Those with whom nature is allowed free scope to develop itself as it will, and who shut out grace from access to their heart, must attain to a ripeness in sinning which would be incredible if nature were originally and still predominantly good. The opposition is not between those who have been corrupt from their mother's womb, and who are not so now, but between those in whom the corruption common to all has uninterruptedly developed itself, and those in whom the development has been hemmed in and broken through. That the inborn depravity is quite a general one, extending over the whole family of man, appears from

Gen. viii. 21, the confession of David himself in Ps. li. 6, and Job xiv. 4. *Arnd:* "The godless are wayward from their mother's womb, from their childhood upwards there is nothing good in them; the godly, although they also are conceived and born in sin, yet live in the new birth, in daily repentance." —*Hengstenberg.*

4. *They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.* What the ineffectual charms are in reference to the excessively poisonous serpent, that are with the venomous and wicked man the prayers and entreaties of those who suffer injury from him and his friends, as an example of which we have only to think of David's representations to Saul, and Jonathan's intercessions, both so persuasive, that their fruitlessness presents to our view the wickedness of Saul, which is a reflection of man's generally, as a deep abyss. Not only, however, does the resemblance hold in regard to such prayers and entreaties, but also to the admonitions of the servants of God, and last of all, to the reproofs and warnings which God himself brings to bear on men through their conscience. How powerfully these resounded in the dark soul of Saul, may be seen in the conviction often uttered by him, that David, upheld by God, would escape his persecutions and gain the day. But although his conscience called to him aloud that his striving was wrong and to no purpose, the strength of wickedness in him was so great, that he could not desist from it. The subject in חֵרֵשׁ is not the adder (commonly, "which stops its ear"), but the wicked. The *stopping* requires hands, and what is already deaf by nature has no need to stop. It is just by means of stopping that the wicked make themselves like the deaf adder. *Arnd:* "As we see in the history of the holy martyr Stephen. When he made his confession before the ecclesiastical council at Jerusalem, and said, 'Lo, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,' to the Jewish prelates that was so insufferable a testimony, that in order to retain their poison, they stopped their ears, and cried aloud."—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM LIX.

1. *Deliver me,* &c. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated. "*Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God;* thou art *God,* and canst deliver me; *my* God, under whose protection I have put myself, and thou hast promised to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore, in honour and faithfulness, thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. Oh deliver me and save me!" He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, ver. 4, "*Awake to help me;* take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief." Thus the disciples in the storm awoke Christ, saying, *Master, save us, we perish.* And thus earnestly should we pray daily to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.—*Henry.*

7. *Swords are in their lips.* This and similar. expressions of Scripture bring to mind the strong poetical phrase of our great dramatic poet, "I'll speak daggers to her." See Ps. lv. 21. —*Pictorial Bible.*

11, 13. *Slay them not.—Consume them in wrath that they may not be.* David may seem to contradict himself in praying for the utter destruction of his enemies, when immediately before he had expressed his desire that they might not be exterminated at once. What else could he mean when he asks that God would consume them in wrath, but that he would cut them off suddenly, and not by a gradual and slower process of punishment? But he evidently refers in what he says here to a different point of time, and this removes any apparent inconsistency, for he prays that when they had been set up for a sufficient period as an example, they might eventually be devoted to destruction. It was customary with the victorious Roman generals, first to lead the captives which had been kept for the day of triumph through the city, and afterwards, upon reaching the capital, to give them over to the lictors for execution. Now David prays that when God had, in a similar manner, reserved his enemies for an interval sufficient to illustrate his triumph, he would upon this con-

sign them to summary punishment. The two things are not at all inconsistent; first, that the divine judgments should be lengthened out through a considerable period, to secure their being remembered better, and that then, upon sufficient evidence being given to the world of the certainty with which the wicked are subjected in the displeasure of God to the slower process of destruction, he should in due time bring them forth to final execution, the better to awake, by such a demonstration of his power, the minds of those who may be more secure than others, or less affected by witnessing moderate inflictions of punishment. He adds, accordingly, *that they may know, even to the ends of the earth, that God ruleth in Jacob.* Some would insert the copulative particle, reading, *that they may know that God rules in Jacob, and in all the nations of the world*, an interpretation which I do not approve, and which does violence to the sense. The allusion is to the condign nature of the judgment, which would be such that the report of it would reach the remotest regions, and strike salutary terror into the minds even of their benighted and godless inhabitants. He was more especially anxious that God should be recognized as ruling *in the church*, it being preposterous that the place where his throne was erected should present such an aspect of confusion as converted his temple into a den of thieves.—*Calvin.*

15. *Wander up and down for meat.* Dogs may in England do this for amusement, when their essential wants are provided for by their masters; but in the East, where they have no particular masters, they are obliged to do so from necessity. Retaining much of their native habits, as beasts of prey, they do this chiefly by night, as the text intimates, being in general dozy and inactive in the daytime. This contributes to render their presence in an oriental city more formidable, to passengers, at night than by day. In their night prowlings they effectually clear the streets of whatever offal or carrion may be in them; and their want of squeamish appetites is then, as well as by day, evinced to an extent which would alone well account for all the abhorrent allusions which the Scriptures contain. They refuse scarcely anything (except crude vegetables) capable of mastication; and yet are for ever lean, hungry, and unsatisfied: which seems to intimate that the dog was so much intended for and suited to complete domestication, that even while in a position more favourable than that which any other undomesticated beast obtains, it is only in fellowship with man that he can arrive at a prosperous condition of existence.—*Pictorial Bible.*

PSALM LX.

The question has been raised whether of the two should be regarded as the speaker in this psalm—Israel, or Israel's king: in other words, whether the psalm should be treated as strictly national, or as mainly personal. The latter is probably the correct view. The plural pronoun of the opening and concluding verses unquestionably refers to the whole community; but the *I* of the central verses belongs to the king alone. In proof of this, it may be observed that all the other psalms, from Ps. li. to lxiv., are personal; that there is thus no other instance of a national psalm among those Davidic compositions which were excluded by David himself from the first book of the Psalter; and that it is not easy to understand on what principle he should have omitted to consign to the permanent and immediate service of the sanctuary a psalm to which he had given utterance in the name of the whole nation.

But, furthermore, reference is made in ver. 6 to a certain special announcement or promise on God's part. This announcement cannot well be any other than the first part of the message from God to David by the prophet Nathan, 2 Sam. vii. 8–11; which message would appear to have been delivered not long before the wars in the midst of which this psalm was written. With the purport of that message the contents of the psalm sufficiently agree. It had been previously known that David, as king of God's people Israel, was to deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies, 2 Sam. iii. 18. God now more formally declared that by the hand of his servant David he would give his people Israel rest, that he would plant them that they might dwell in a place of their own, where the children of wickedness should no more afflict them. And therefore, in accordance with this announcement, David's prayer in the psalm is, "That thy beloved (ones) may be delivered; save with thy

right hand, and hear me;" *i.e.* "Hear and help me, inasmuch as thou hast chosen me to be the instrument of deliverance to thy beloved." Nor, indeed, can the "banner" which God had given to them that feared him, "to be displayed because of the truth," well be aught else than the Davidic sovereignty, now rendered permanent through the promise given by Nathan, and therefore the sure pledge of the salvation of Israel. Hence such passages as these in the prophecies of Isaiah: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people;" and, "Behold, I have given him (David, *i.e.* Christ, the representative of the Davidic house) for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

Ver. 1–5 form the opening, ver. 9–12 the concluding portion of the psalm; the central and prominent portion is ver. 6–8, consisting of three verses of three lines each. The opening verses delineate the state of depression hitherto; the concluding verses contain the supplication for help; the centre of the psalm is reserved for the announcement of God's promise, and the anticipation, in glorious detail, of its fulfilment.

And here, as unity at home would be essential to the achievement of victory abroad, the king first speaks in ver. 6, 7 of the submission of all Israel to his sway. In ver. 6 Shechem apparently indicates the districts to the west, Succoth those to the east of the Jordan; or should it be urged that Succoth itself was situated to the west of that river, then Shechem may denote the mountain-range of the land of inheritance, and Succoth its level plains. Both Shechem and Succoth are mentioned in the history of Jacob's return from Mesopotamia. He built, as Hengstenberg observes, a house at the latter place, and an altar at the former. In ver. 7 the territories to the east of Jordan are again denoted by the names Gilead and Manasseh; while Ephraim appears as the representative of the central tribes. The Ephraimites were especially strong in point of numbers. In the blessing of Moses it had been said of Ephraim, "His horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth;" hence in the present psalm Ephraim is appropriately described as the "strength of head" of Israel's sovereign. On the other hand, Judah, the royal and dominant tribe, is the king's "staff of authority;" for the staff was not to depart from between Judah's feet till Shiloh came; and in regard to David, it was the tribe of Judah alone that had, immediately upon Saul's death, anointed him king in Hebron, and acknowledged his authority, while Ishbosheth was reigning over the remaining tribes. But at length all Israel had been for a while reconciled; and at the head of a united nation David was gone forth to subdue the surrounding foes of God's people, and to put an end to that state of depression in which Israel had remained during the reign of Saul, and to which reference is made in the beginning of the present psalm.

And in the prosecution of this career of victory there is meted out to each foe his own appropriate recompense. Moab, the descendant and representative of unholy lust, Moab, who had at Shittim enticed Israel to impurity, becomes at David's hands a mere receptacle of filth. Edom, the proudest and most malicious enemy of Israel, is in contumely reduced to the most menial servitude: or if the casting out of the shoe be regarded as the customary token of the appropriation of an estate, then Edom, who had profanely despised his birthright, beholds the inheritance to which birthright is the title ravished from him. And Philistia, the warrior-foe, who had so long oppressed God's people, and so often triumphed over them in the battle-field, is now at last, in bitter irony, bidden triumph if she can. A stronger than she is come upon her to overcome her, taking from her all the armour wherein she trusted, and dividing her spoils.

It is not without reason that we venture to expound the words of this psalm by those of our Saviour. For as the banner of ver. 4, which was to be "displayed because of the truth," is evidently contemplated in the psalm as something permanent, it is certain that David could not have uttered the psalm in his own individual person so much as in the person of his lineage, and more especially of that Great Representative of his house, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who, having trodden the wine-press alone, should come from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save; and who, himself the author of a new and better covenant, and with

the whole of the people of the new covenant united under his sway, should go forth conquering and to conquer, and should reign till all enemies were put under his feet. The Christian church, in repeating this psalm, glories, as in Ps. xviii., in the triumphs of her eternal King; and learns at the same time for herself the important lesson that it is by her own internal unity, and the united obedience of her several members to the true sovereignty of Christ, that she will best prepare herself for a career of victory over her heathen foes. —*Thrupp.*

PSALM LXI.

The question may be asked, whether David composed the psalm for any particular occasion, or merely for his own comfort, and that of his successors on the throne, in disastrous times, and for the purpose of confirming the courage of his subjects. In favour of the first view, we have the clause, "from the ends of the earth," which would seem to intimate that the psalmist was at the time in *exile*, and that therefore the psalm must have been composed during the rebellion of Absalom, when David was beyond Jordan. Comp. Ps. xlii. 6. This special occasion, however, must not lead us to lose sight of the *general* reference. It could only be by keeping this reference in view that David issued the psalm for public use. The psalm, even in our days, has its complete use, inasmuch as the promises in 2 Sam. vii. have undoubtedly their complete fulfilment in Christ. Generally, whenever the kingdom of Christ is in danger, we may, in addition to other considerations, plead with God as the psalmist does, on the ground also of this particular promise which he there made.—*Hengstenberg.*

6. *Thou wilt prolong the king's life*, &c. David cannot be considered as using these words of gratulation with an exclusive reference to himself. It is true that he lived to an extreme old age, and died full of days, leaving the kingdom in a settled condition, and in the hands of his son, who succeeded him; but he did not exceed the period of one man's life, and the greater part of it was spent in continual dangers and anxieties. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the series of years, and even ages, of which he speaks, extends prospectively to the coming of Christ, it being the very condition of the kingdom, as I have often remarked, that God maintained them as one people under one head, or, when scattered, united them again. The same succession still subsists in reference to ourselves. Christ must be viewed as living in his members to the end of the world. To this Isaiah alludes when he says, "Who shall declare his generation or age?" Words in which he predicts that the church would survive through all ages, notwithstanding the incessant danger of destruction to which it is exposed through the attacks of its enemies, and the many storms assailing it. So here David foretells the uninterrupted succession of the kingdom down to the time of Christ.—*Calvin.*

6, 7. These words must be applied to Him of whom it was said by the angel, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 32. The ancient church prayed for "his" exaltation and glory, under those of his representative; nay, the Chaldee paraphrast expounds this passage of Messiah only: "Thou shalt add days to the days of King Messias; his years shall be as the generation of this world, and of the world to come." Nor can a better paraphrase be easily devised.—*Horne.*

PSALM LXII.

5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* Calvin renders, *Nevertheless, my soul, be thou silent before God*, and remarks that "here there may appear to be a slight inconsistency, inasmuch as he encourages himself to do what he had already declared himself to have done. His soul was silent before God; and where the necessity of this new silence, as if still under agitation of spirit? Here it is to be remembered that our minds can never be expected to reach such perfect composure as shall preclude every inward feeling of disquietude, but are at the best as the sea before a light breeze, fluctuating sensibly, though not swollen into billows. It is not without a struggle that the saint can compose his mind; and we can very well understand how David should enjoin more perfect submission upon a spirit which was already submissive, urging upon himself further advancement in this grace of silence till he had mortified every carnal inclination, and thoroughly subjected himself to the

will of God. How often, besides, will Satan renew the disquietudes which seemed to be effectually expelled? Creatures of such instability, and liable to be borne away by a thousand different influences, we need to be confirmed again and again. I repeat that there is no reason to be surprised, though David here calls upon himself a second time to preserve that silence before God which he might already appear to have attained; for, amidst the disturbing motions of the flesh, perfect composure is what we never reach. The danger is that when new winds of trouble spring up, we lose that inward tranquillity which we enjoyed; and hence the necessity of improving the example of David by establishing ourselves in it more and more. He adds the ground of his silence. He had no immediate response from God, but he confidently hoped in him. *My expectation*, he says, *is from God*. Never, as if he had said, will he frustrate the patient waiting of his saints; doubtless my silence shall meet with its reward; I shall restrain myself, and not make that false haste which will only retard my deliverance."

11, 12. *Power belongeth unto God . . . also . . . mercy.* The man who disciplines himself to the contemplation of these two attributes, which ought never to be dissociated in our minds from the idea of God, is certain to stand erect and immovable under the fiercest assaults of temptation; while, on the other hand, by losing sight of the all-sufficiency of God (which we are too apt to do), we lay ourselves open to be overwhelmed in the first encounter. The world's opinion of God is, that he sits in heaven an idle and unconcerned spectator of events which are passing. Need we wonder that men tremble under every casualty when they thus believe themselves to be the sport of blind chance? There can be no security felt unless we satisfy ourselves of the truth of a divine superintendence, and can commit our lives, and all that we have, to the hands of God. The first thing which we must look to is his power, that we may have a thorough conviction of his being a sure refuge to such as cast themselves upon his care. With this there must be conjoined confidence in his mercy, to prevent those anxious thoughts which might otherwise rise in our minds. These may suggest the doubt, What though God govern the world? does it follow that he will concern himself about such unworthy objects as ourselves? There is an obvious reason, then, for the psalmist coupling these two things together, his power and his clemency. They are the two wings wherewith we fly upwards to heaven; the two pillars on which we rest, and may defy the surges of temptation. Does danger, in short, spring up from any quarter, then just let us call to remembrance that divine power which can bid away all harms, and as this sentiment prevails in our minds, our troubles cannot fail to fall prostrate before it. Why should we fear? how can we be afraid, when the God who covers us with the shadow of his wings, is the same who rules the universe with his nod, holds in secret chains the devil and all the wicked, and effectually overrules their designs and intrigues?—*Calvin.*

PSALM LXIII.

It may have been near the Dead Sea, on his way to the ford of Jordan, that the psalmist first sang this song. It is a psalm first heard by David's faithful ones in the wilderness of Judah; but truly a psalm for every godly man who in the dry world-wilderness can sing, "All my springs are in thee"—a psalm for David—a psalm for David's Son—a psalm for the church in every age—a psalm for every member of the church in the weary land! What assurance, what vehement desire, what soul-filling delight in God, in God alone—in God the only fountain of living water amid a boundless wilderness! Hope, too, has its visions here; for it sees the ungodly perish, ver. 8-10, and *the King* on the throne surrounded by a company who swear allegiance to Jehovah. Hope sees for itself what Is. lxiv.16 describes—every mouth "swearing by the God of truth;" and what Rev. xxi. 27 has foretold, the mouth of "liars" closed for ever—all who sought other gods, and trusted to other saviours, gone for ever. And when we read all this as spoken of Christ, how much does every verse become enhanced? *His* thirst for God! *His* vision of God! *His* estimate of God's loving-kindness! *His* soul satisfied! *His* mouth full of praise! *His* soul following hard after God!

"*O God, thou art my El*"—mighty one. Thou art my omnipotence. It is this God he still seeks. The כִּי of ver. 2 and of ver. 4 is interesting. In

ver. 2 the force of it is this, "No wonder that I so thirst for thee; no wonder that my first thoughts at morning are toward thee: no wonder that my very flesh longeth for thee! Who would not that has seen what I have seen? *So* have I gazed on thee in the sanctuary, seeing thy power and thy glory!" The "so" is like 2 Pet. i. 17, "*such* a voice!" And then if the past has been thus exquisitely blessed, my prospects for the future are not less so. I see illimitable bliss coming in as a tide; "*so will I bless thee while I have being!*" ver. 4. Yes; in ages to come, as well as in many a happy moment on earth, my soul shall be satiated as with marrow and with fatness! And when ver. 7 shows us the soul under the shadow of God's wings, rejoicing, we may say, it is not only like as "the bird sheltered from the heat of the sun amid the rich foliage sings its merry note," but it is the soul reposing there as if entering the cloud of glory, like Moses and Elias.

O world! come and see *the Righteous One finding water-springs in God.—A. A. Bonar.*

Ps. lxiii. is a sunny one, although it comes from the darkest period of David's life. It embalms for the solace of God's people the sentiments that filled the psalmist's heart when Absalom's revolt drove him into the wilderness of Judah. In the day of his distress his soul turns to God as his true portion, and he finds ineffable enjoyment in communing with him. How deeply does the psalmist realize the presence of God—of a personal God—to whom he can speak, whom his heart can trust! How entirely is he persuaded that he may behold, and has often beheld, God's power and glory; and that this beholding of "the beauty of the Lord" is the proper felicity of his soul. It ought not to be thought to derogate from the sincerity or value of this profession of faith, or of the similar professions uttered in the psalms formerly cited, that they were elicited by sharp afflictions and temptations. When we are surrounded with the lights of a city, the stars are unheeded; but when those nearer lights are extinguished, the stars shine out and fill the eye with a superior delight. It is just so with God's people. In a prosperous time earthly enjoyments are apt so to occupy the thoughts and affections as to turn them aside from God. He is wont accordingly to send on his people afflictions and temptations in order to drive them in upon their proper portion, and thus to fill their souls with the deep and tranquil enjoyment which it alone yields.—*Binnie.*

The psalm is aptly described by Clauss as "a precious confession of a soul thirsting after God and his grace, and finding itself quickened through inward communion with him, and which knows how to commit its outward lot also into his hand." Its lesson is, that the consciousness of communion with God in trouble is the sure pledge of deliverance. This is the peculiar fountain of consolation which is opened up to the sufferer in the psalm. The Berleb. Bible describes it as a psalm "which proceeds from a spirit really in earnest. It was the favourite psalm of M. Schade, the famous preacher in Berlin, which he daily prayed with such earnestness and appropriation to himself that it was impossible to hear it without emotion." —*Hengstenberg.*

1. *A dry and thirsty land*, &c. The more recent expositors consider the residence in the wilderness and the being weary as a mere *figure*, descriptive of a miserable condition. This in itself is possible; but the parallel passage in Samuel shows that we must abide by the literal rendering. The particular feature, however, is not to be viewed by itself, but as symptomatic and descriptive of the whole condition in which the psalmist was placed. For this it was singularly suited: a king who could not get even a drink of water to quench his thirst! All human fountains of consolation and happiness were dried up to the psalmist. But he thirsts all the more earnestly after the divine fountain which still remained open to him. It is by this that he is known as a child of God. When the children of the world are in a dry land, and are wearied and without water, the last remains of any desire after God disappear from their souls. But real piety in proportion to the severity of personal suffering becomes all the more intense in its longings after God. By the extent to which a man in severe sufferings can say, "I seek thee," &c., may he decide on the state of his soul. —*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM LXV.

The *object* of the psalm is announced in the concluding verse. It should be

sung when "the flocks are covered with lambs, and the valleys are clothed with corn." Hence the whole, from ver. 1–8, is to be considered as an *introduction*. We are led to the same result, by observing that it is only the goodness of God, as seen in the blessings of harvest, that is dwelt upon at length, while everything else is touched upon briefly and slightly; that the whole psalm ends with such a special delineation without returning to those general views with which it opened; and finally, that the ninth verse, with which the description of harvest begins, is of such disproportionate length as to show that in it the psalmist enters for the first time upon his proper subject. . . .

Although the psalm refers to the *harvest*, yet it is incorrect to maintain that it is peculiarly a song of thanksgiving for harvest, and especially to suppose that it was sung at the passover, on the second day of which the first-fruits were presented in the temple, upon which harvest began. Luther says more correctly: he thanks God for "good weather and a propitious season." It was intended to be sung when favourable *appearances* had presented themselves in reference to the harvest, when God had given the former and the latter rain in their seasons, Jer. v. 24, and when, in consequence of this, everything was flourishing and growing luxuriantly. This is manifest from the *concluding* verse, according to which, the psalm was intended to be sung at a time when the valleys *are clothing* themselves with corn (not *have been clothed*), and from ver. 9 and 10, where the psalmist speaks of rain as if he saw it just descending. Hitzig has taken altogether a wrong view, according to whom, the psalm was composed for the feast of tabernacles, "when the fruits of the earth had been gathered in, and the seed, recently committed to the ground, was waiting for the early rain." —*Hengstenberg.*

2. *Thou that hearest prayer.* The title here given to God carries with it a truth of great importance, That the answer of our prayers is secured by the fact, that in rejecting them he would in a certain sense deny his own nature. The psalmist does not say, that God has heard prayer in this or that instance, but gives him the name of the Hearer of prayer, as what constitutes an abiding part of his glory, so that he might as soon deny himself as shut his ear to our petitions. Could we only impress this upon our minds, that it is something peculiar to God, and inseparable from him, to hear prayer, it would inspire us with unfailing confidence. The power of helping us he can never want, so that nothing can stand in the way of a successful issue of our supplications.—*Calvin.*

3. *Iniquities prevail against me.* Calvin gives the translation, *Words of iniquity have prevailed*, but adds, "He does not complain of the people being assailed with calumny, but is to be understood as confessing that their sins were the cause of any interruption which had taken place in the communication of the divine favour to the Jews. The passage is parallel with that in Is. lix. 1—"The ear of the Lord is not heavy that it cannot hear, but our iniquities have separated betwixt us and him." David imputes it to his own sins and those of the people, that God, who was wont to be liberal in his help, and so gracious and kind in inviting their dependence upon him, had withdrawn for a time his divine countenance. First, he acknowledges his own personal guilt; afterwards, like Daniel (ix. 5), he joins the whole nation with himself. And this truth is introduced by the psalmist with no design to damp confidence in prayer, but rather to remove an obstacle standing in the way of it, as none could draw near to God unless convinced that he would hear the unworthy. It is probable that the Lord's people were at that time suffering under some token of the divine displeasure, since David seems here to struggle with some temptation of this kind. He evidently felt that there was a sure remedy at hand, for no sooner has he referred to the subject of guilt, than he recognizes the prerogative of God to pardon and expiate it. The verse before us must be viewed in connection with the preceding, and as meaning that though their iniquities merited their being cast out of God's sight, yet they would continue to pray, encouraged by his readiness to be reconciled to them. We learn from the passage that God will not be entreated of us unless we humbly supplicate the pardon of our sins. On the other hand, we are to believe firmly in reconciliation with God being procured through gratuitous remission. Should he at any time withdraw his favour, and frown upon us, we must learn by David's example

to rise to the hope of the expiation of our sins."

4. *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house.* The psalmist insists upon the fruit springing out of the blessed privilege of which he had spoken, when he adds that believers *would be satisfied* with the fulness of his temple. Hypocrites may go there, but they return empty and unsatisfied as to any spiritual blessing enjoyed. It is noticeable that the person is changed in this part of the verse, and that David associates himself with other believers, preferring to speak upon this subject from personal experience. We are not to understand that believers are fully replenished with the goodness of God at any one moment; it is conveyed to them gradually; but while the influences of the Spirit are thus imparted in successive measures, each of them is enriched with a present sufficiency, till all be in due time advanced to perfection. I might remark here that while it is true, as stated, Ps. ciii. 5, that God "satisfieth our mouth with good things," at the same time it is necessary to remember what is said elsewhere, "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it." Our contracted desires is the reason why we do not receive a more copious supply of blessings from God; he sees that we are straitened in ourselves, and accommodates the communications of his goodness to the measure of our expectations. By specifying particularly the *goodness of the sanctuary*, the psalmist passes an implied commendation upon the outward helps which God has appointed for leading us into the enjoyment of heavenly blessings. In these former times God could have directly stretched out his hand from heaven to supply the wants of his worshippers, but saw fit to satisfy their souls by means of the doctrine of the law, sacrifices, and other rites and external aids to piety. Similar are the means which he employs in the church still; and though we are not to rest in these, neither must we neglect them.—*Calvin.*

9–13. This is the special thanksgiving which is called forth by the refreshing rain which God has sent, and the rich and glorious harvest which is already waving and ripening before their eyes. . . .

The language flows with the thoughts. The bright harvest-scene is before the eyes of the inspired singer. He stands looking on the fields white already to the harvest, and his soul within him rejoices in their golden promise. The poet and the world without him are at one accord. The fulness of joy in his heart, as he sees how his God has poured blessing upon the land, passes as it were by a contagion of sunny gladness into the inanimate creation, and the very corn-fields seem to him to shout together, yea to sing for joy.—*Perowne.*

[*Conclusion of the psalm.*] We should, with wonder, gratitude, and praise, behold and participate the abundance, which, by the wise and kind providence of God, is diffused through the earth: and, while we see year after year crowned with the goodness of the Lord, so that the hills and valleys, covered with corn and cattle, seem to proclaim and rejoice in their Creator's praise; we should remember our unworthiness, be thankful for our portion, and use it to the glory of the Giver; admire and imitate his bounty to the indigent, as we are able, and his goodness to the wicked and ungrateful children of men; and pity and pray for those who abuse these gifts to the dishonour of the giver.—But these temporal mercies to us unworthy creatures, shadow forth more important blessings. The rising of "the Sun of righteousness," and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that "river of God" full of the waters of life and salvation, render the hearts of sinners, which before were hard, barren, and worthless, fruitful in every good work; and change the face of nations, far more than the sun and rain do the face of nature. Wherever the Lord passes, by the preaching of his gospel, attended by his Holy Spirit, "his paths drop fatness;" and numbers of every description are taught to rejoice in him and praise him. These blessings have already been extended to many nations which were far off: may we unite in fervent prayers and vigorous, persevering, and self-denying endeavours, that they may descend upon the pastures of the wilderness, the heathen world, and the poor benighted Jews; and that the whole earth may hear and embrace the gospel; and may all who are favoured with the means of grace bring forth abundantly "those fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father."—*Scott.*

PSALM LXVI.

10, 12. *Thou, O God! hast proved us,*

&c. We may read, *Though thou, O God!* &c., and then the passage comes in as a qualification of what went before, and is brought forward by the psalmist to enhance the goodness of God, who had delivered them from such severe calamities. But there is another object which I consider him to have in view, and this is the alleviation of the grief of God's people, by setting before them the comfort suggested by the words which follow. When visited with affliction it is of great importance that we should consider it as coming from God, and as expressly intended for our good. It is in reference to this that the psalmist speaks of their having been *proved and tried*. At the same time, while he adverts to God's trying his children with the view of purging away their sin, as dross is expelled from the silver by fire, he would intimate also that trial had been made of their patience. The figure implies that their probation had been severe; for silver is cast repeatedly into the furnace. They express themselves thankful to God that, while proved with affliction, they had not been destroyed by it; but that their affliction was both varied and very severe, appears not only from the metaphor, but from the whole context, where they speak of having been cast into the net, being reduced to straits, men riding over their heads, and of being brought through shipwreck and conflagration. The expression, *laying a restraint* (or *chain*) upon *their loins*, is introduced as being stronger than the one which goes before. It was not a net of thread which had been thrown over them, but rather they had been bound down with hard and insolvable fetters. The expression which follows refers to men who had shamefully tyrannized over them, and ridden them down as cattle. By *fire* and *water* are evidently meant complicated afflictions; and it is intimated that God had exercised his people in every form of calamity. They are the two elements which contribute more than any other to sustain human life, but are equally powerful for the destruction of it. It is noticeable that the psalmist speaks of all the cruelties they had most unjustly suffered from the hands of their enemies as an infliction of divine punishment; and would guard the Lord's people against imagining that God was ignorant of what they endured, or distracted by other things from giving attention to it. In their condition as here described, we have that of the church generally represented to us; and this, that when subjected to vicissitudes, and cast out of the fire into the water, by a succession of trials, there may at last be felt to be nothing new or strange in the event to strike us with alarm. The Hebrew word, רְוָיָה, which I have rendered *fruitful place*, means literally *a well-watered land*. Here it is taken metaphorically for a condition of prosperity, the people of God being represented as brought into a pleasant and fertile place, where there is abundance of pasturage. The truth conveyed is, that God, although he visit his children with temporary chastisements of a severe description, will ultimately crown them with joy and prosperity. It is a mistake to suppose that the allusion is entirely to their being settled in the land of Canaan, for the psalm has not merely reference to the troubles which they underwent in the wilderness, but to the whole series of distresses to which they were subjected at the different periods of their history.—*Calvin.*

How grievous the distress and danger were. What particular trouble of the church this refers to does not appear. It might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But whatever it was, they were surprised with it, as a bird with a snare, inclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it and kept under as with a load *upon their loins*. But they owned the hand of God in it. We are never in the net but God brings us into it; never under affliction but God lays it upon us. Is anything more dangerous than fire and water? *We went through both*—afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints; but he has promised, "*When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee*," Is. xliii. 2. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so. "*Beware of men*," Mat. x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening, Ps. cxxiv. 2-4; and that was the case here. "*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads*;" to trample upon us and insult over us; to hector

and abuse us: nay, to make perfect slaves of us. They have said to our souls, "*Bow down that we may go over*," Is. li. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God: "Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;" for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.—*Henry.*

PSALM LXVII.

Prayer for revival at home and prayer for a blessing abroad ought ever therefore to go hand in hand. This is brought out in Ps. lxvii.;—the missionary hymn of the Hebrew church. How admirably balanced are the parts of this missionary song! The people of God long to see all the nations participating in their privileges, "visited with God's salvation, and gladdened with the gladness of his nation," Ps. cvi. 5. They long to hear all the nationalities giving thanks to the Lord, and hallowing his name; to see the face of the whole earth, which sin has darkened so long, smiling with the brightness of a second Eden. This is not a vapid sentiment. The desire is so expressed as to connect with it the thought of duty and responsibility. For how do they expect that the happy times are to be reached? They trust, in the first instance, to the general diffusion of the knowledge of God's way, the spreading abroad of the truth regarding the way of salvation. With a view to that they cry for a time of quickening from the presence of the Lord, and take encouragement in this prayer from the terms of the divinely-appointed benediction. As if they had said, "Hast thou not commanded the sons of Aaron to put thy name upon us and to say, The LORD bless thee and keep thee; the LORD cause his face to shine on thee and be gracious to thee? Remember that sure word of thine! God be gracious unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Let us be thus blessed, and we shall in our turn become a blessing. All the families of the earth shall through us become acquainted with thy salvation." Such is the church's expectation. And who shall say it is unreasonable? If the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples who met in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, all of them persons of humble station and unconspicuous talents, were endued with such power by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that within three hundred years the paganism of the empire was overthrown, one need not fear to affirm that, in order to the evangelization of the world, nothing more is required than that the churches of Christendom be baptized with a fresh effusion of the same Spirit of power.—*Binnie.*

2. *Thy way.* The *way* of God is his procedure: from the experience of Israel, the heathen shall know how God *acts*, what are those treasures of salvation which are laid up with him for his people; as even at the present time there are not more powerful means of bringing the world to God than the perception of the gifts which he imparts to the living members of his church: comp. Ps. xxv. 10, "All the *ways* of God are grace and truth;" Ps. ciii. 7, "He has made known his *ways* to Moses, his deeds to the children of Israel." The parallel term, "his salvation," is sufficient against the translation, "his religion;" comp. Ps. xcvi. 2; xcviii. 2. The idea that the blessings of Israel would exert an attractive influence on heathen nations, occurs in the promises made to the patriarchs, Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4, "And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in thy seed," *i.e.* they wish for, and they earnestly desire for themselves the lot of Israel as the highest good, and this wish shall be the means of their obtaining the blessing (*being blessed*, Niph. Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18), inasmuch as it will lead them to the Author of the blessing. Is. lx. 3 is also parallel: "and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."—*Hengstenberg.*

3. *Let all the people praise thee.* As if she had said, Hitherto indeed, blessed Lord, thou hast thought fit to make me the guardian and keeper of that great deposit, thy true religion, from which the nations revolted and fell; but the time is coming, when, by the gospel of thy dear Son, they shall again be called to the knowledge of thee. Thy glory, impatient, as it were, of any longer restraint, and demanding a larger sphere, shall diffuse itself, like the light of heaven, to the ends of the world. Hasten, then, O hasten the dawning of that happy day when congregations of converted Gentiles shall everywhere lift up their voices, and perhaps in the

words of this very psalm, sing to thy praise and glory!—*Horne.*

PSALM LXVIII.

The title confines itself to the announcement that the psalm was composed by David, and set apart by him for the public service; but is silent as to the occasion on which it was composed. For determining this last point, we have nothing therefore to look to except internal reasons. Many expositors, and latterly Stier, have come to the conclusion that the psalm was written on the occasion when the ark of the covenant was brought to Mount Zion: comp. at Ps. xxiv. Others again have adopted the idea that the occasion must have been the termination of some war, when the ark was brought back to the holy mountain. This last view is the correct one. A strong argument in its favour is drawn from the circumstance that God is throughout celebrated decidedly as the *Lord of battle* and *of victory*. The introductory clause, "God arises, his enemies are scattered, and they who hate him flee before him," gives forth at the very beginning the *fundamental tone*, and the subject of the whole psalm; while at the same time, in a psalm composed for such an occasion, and of such a length, many other subjects would certainly be introduced. Farther, we are led to a *victory* as the occasion by ver. 18, which, like ver. 6 of Ps. lxvii., "The earth gave its increase," announces the matter of fact which called forth the psalm, and which ought to be considered as supplementary to the title, and should properly be printed in large characters. Then we have the epithets which are applied in ver. 17 to Benjamin and Judah, and, finally, the close fitting in to the *victory-song* of Deborah: inasmuch as the author, in ver. 7 and 8, at the very beginning of his chief division, refers verbally to the beginning of the chief division of this song, he declares, as distinctly as possible, that he walks in the *footsteps* of Deborah, and that his song is to be considered as a continuation or resumption of hers, exactly as with manifest design, by the reference in the opening verse of the psalm to the language of Moses, he intimates that the text and the subject of the whole are taken from him.

We have two data to guide us in our inquiry as to what particular battle and victory the triumphal procession in the sanctuary belongs, at which, according to ver. 24–27, the psalm was sung. First, the psalm must have been composed at a time when the sanctuary of the Lord was on Mount Zion (ver. 15, 16, 29, 35). The choice is thus very much narrowed. There remain only two great victories, the Syrian-Edomite and the Ammonitic-Syrian. Second, in the war referred to in this psalm, the *ark of the covenant* must have been in the field according to ver. 1 and 24. It is evident from 2 Sam. xi. 11, that this was the case in the Ammonitic war. We may therefore with great probability conclude that the psalm was composed after the capture of Rabbah (2 Sam. xii. 26–31), which terminated that war, the most dangerous with which David had to do. It was quite in accordance with David's usual manner to celebrate a great religious festival at the close of such a war. The closing character which our psalm so manifestly bears, is in favour of this view. That war was the last important external war in which David engaged, and from existing circumstances he might pretty confidently conclude that it would be so. The name of Solomon, which soon after this he gave to his son, shows that he considered peace as secured for a long time.—*Hengstenberg.*

10. *Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.* The acknowledgment refers to the gracious attention of God to Israel, his pensioners, while they sojourned in the wilderness. They were destitute of all ordinary supplies; but "he commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." We are not to look for miraculous provision; but God has not forsaken the earth, nor forgotten to be gracious. Let us observe the nature of this goodness, and the subjects for whom it is prepared. The goodness of God appears in the produce of the ground even for the brute creation. Indeed man is concerned in their support; and a deficiency with regard to them would materially affect his own welfare. But while the Lord cares for oxen, and causes the grass to grow for the cattle, he provides *corn* for the more immediate service of man. . . . But we are here reminded not only of the nature of his goodness, but the subjects of it:

"Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." It is not for them exclusively. "The king is served by the field." A supply for the poor is of course a supply for the rich; and it is easy to see that a suspension of the divine goodness would involve all ranks. The rich can no more create than the poor; and should the course of vegetation be stopped by Him who has power to destroy as well as to produce, what profit would a man have of all the wealth he possessed? Wealth would be nothing if it could not be laid out: and if the time ever came, which the Lord forbid! in which there was neither earing nor harvest, the proprietor, as well as the peasant and the pauper, would perish. But it is spoken in reference to the poor, because, First, they are the larger mass of mankind; and whatever pride may think, in the eye of reason, policy, and revelation, by far the most important, useful, and necessary part. Secondly, they would be more peculiarly affected by deficiency. Dear purchases can be made by the rich, who, as the price of provisions advances, can follow it. But the poor are speedily straitened, and become a prey to scarceness; and every door is shut against them but that of precarious charity. Thirdly, to encourage those in humble and trying life to depend upon him. What he did formerly he does now. He prepares of his goodness for the poor. He may try you, and require proof of your confidence, before he communicates relief: but "the needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." "Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Fourthly, to enforce our attention to them from the divine example. We see how he had his eye upon the poor in the Jewish economy. It is delightful to read the various provisions concerning them in the law of Moses. All the earth spontaneously yielded, the seventh year, belonged to the poor. At harvest the owners were not to cut down the corners of their fields; they were to scatter some handfuls behind them for the gleaner; and if they dropped a sheaf, they were not to go back for it.—*Jay.*

13. *Though ye have lien among the pots*, &c. Professor Alexander renders *when ye lie down between the borders*, (ye shall be like) *the wings of a dove covered with silver and her pinions with yellow gold.* The general idea, he adds, seems to be that when "the land had rest," her condition was one of peaceful prosperity. The common version of the first clause (*though ye have lien among the pots*) is justified neither by rabbinical tradition nor the ancient versions. The Hebrew noun occurs only here, and in Ezek. xl. 43, where it is equally obscure, and the cognate forms in Gen. xlix. 14; Judg. v. 16, are scarcely less so. The only meaning, besides those already mentioned, which has any probability, is that of *folds* or *sheep-cotes*, lying among which might be viewed as a poetical figure for rural or pastoral repose, thus amounting to the same thing with the first translation, which describes the people as residing quietly *between the borders*, i.e. within the boundaries or frontiers of their territory, now once more forsaken by the enemy. The beautiful allusion in the last clause to the changeable colours of a dove's plumage seems intended to suggest the idea of a peaceful but splendid prosperity.

18. *Thou hast ascended*, &c. As the passage is applied by Paul in a more spiritual sense to Christ (Eph. iv. 8), it may be necessary to show how this agrees with the meaning and scope of the psalmist. It may be laid down as an incontrovertible truth that David, in reigning over Christ's ancient people, shadowed forth the beginning of Christ's eternal kingdom. This must appear evident to every one who remembers the promise made to him of a never-failing succession, and which received its verification in the person of Christ. As God illustrated his power in David by exalting him with the view of delivering his people, so has he magnified his name in his only-begotten Son. But let us consider more particularly how the parallel holds. Christ, before he was exalted, emptied himself of his glory, having not merely assumed the form of a servant, but humbled himself to the death of the cross. To show how exactly the figure was fulfilled, Paul notices that what David had foretold was accomplished in the person of Christ by his being cast down to the lowest parts of the earth, in the reproach and ignominy to which he was subjected, before he ascended to the right hand of his Father (Ps. xxii. 7).

That in thinking upon the ascension, we might not confine our views to the body of Christ, our attention is called to the result and fruit of it in his subjecting heaven and earth to his government. Those who were formerly his inveterate enemies he compelled to submission and made tributary—this being the effect of the word of the gospel to lead men to renounce their pride and their obstinacy, to bring down every high thought which exalteth itself, and reduce the senses and the affections of men to obedience unto Christ. As to the devils and reprobate men who are instigated to rebellion and revolt by obstinate malice, he holds them bound by a secret control, and prevents them from executing intended destruction. So far the parallel is complete. Nor when Paul speaks of Christ having *given gifts to men*, is there any real inconsistency with what is here stated, although he has altered the words, having followed the Greek version in accommodation to the unlearned reader. It was not himself that God enriched with the spoils of the enemy, but his people; and neither did Christ seek or need to seek his own advancement, but made his enemies tributary, that he might adorn his church with the spoil. From the close union subsisting between the head and members, to say that God manifest in the flesh received gifts from the captives, is one and the same thing with saying that he distributed them to his church. What is said in the close of the verse is no less applicable to Christ —that he obtained his victories that as God he might dwell among us. Although he departed, it was not that he might remove to a distance from us; but, as Paul says, "that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 10). By his ascension to heaven the glory of his divinity has been only more illustriously displayed, and though no longer present with us in the flesh, our souls receive spiritual nourishment from his body and blood, and we find, notwithstanding distance of place, that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.—*Calvin.*

The ascent of the ark, in which God was present, into Zion, prefigured the ascent of Christ into heaven. As God came down to fight for his people, so Christ had descended to this earth for the salvation of men. As, on the return of the ark, the captives and the spoil appeared in the procession, so on the return of Christ in triumph to heaven (Col. ii. 15), He led captive sin and death, and hell, and all evil powers. As God had *taken* tribute among men, which he, however, as the victorious monarch of Israel, had given to Israel, so Christ also had taken gifts among men (in his human nature and through his work on earth) which he now, as ascended Lord, gave to men. The apostle sees that when a king takes, he takes to give, and therefore substitutes the one word for the other, without at all putting the one word as the *translation* of the other. He seizes the idea and represents it in its true fulfilment. Calvin has some excellent remarks on the principle of interpretation to be followed here.—*Perowne.*

PSALM LXIX.

We are somewhat surprised that our author should have any difficulty in connection with the Messianic character of this psalm, and that he should find it necessary to explain the numerous quotations from it in the New Testament on the principle of accommodation—a principle which he has in so many other places abandoned (ver. 4, 9, 21, 22, 25). We subjoin *Dr. Binnie's* view:—"The frequency with which the Old Testament scriptures are cited by our blessed Lord and the writers of the New Testament, and the marked deference with which the citations are made, have always and justly been regarded as a strong testimony to the plenary authority of the ancient scriptures. Well, it is remarkable that the psalms under discussion have been counted worthy of an eminent share in this honour. Ps. lxix., for example, which bears more of the imprecatory character than any other except Ps. cix., is expressly quoted in five separate places, besides being alluded to in several places more. Among all the psalms there are only some three or four others that have been so largely quoted by Christ and the apostles; and they are all great Messianic hymns (Ps. ii. xxii. cx. cxviii. are the four most frequently quoted in the New Testament). The *nature* of the quotations is even more significant than their number. It would seem that our Lord appropriated the psalm to himself, and that we are to take it as a disclosure of thoughts and feelings which found a place in his heart during the period of his ministry on the earth. In the guest-

chamber he quoted the words of the fourth verse: 'They hated me without a cause;' and represented them as a prediction of the people's hatred of the Father and of himself (Jn. xv. 25). When he drove the traffickers from the temple, John informs us that 'his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up' (Jn. ii. 17); which implies that those words of the psalm expressed the very mind that was in Christ. When Peter, after mentioning the crime and perdition of Judas, suggested to the company of the hundred and twenty disciples that they ought to take measures for the appointment of a new apostle to fill the vacant place, he enforced the suggestion by a quotation: 'For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and his bishoprick let another take' (Acts i. 20):—manifestly on the supposition that this psalm and the hundred and ninth (for the quotation is from them both) were written with reference to Judas. In the epistle to the Romans, the duty of pleasing, every one of us, our neighbour for his good, is enforced by the apostle with the argument that 'even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me' (ver. 22 and 23, compared with Rom. xi. 9, 10): an argument which has no weight if David alone is the speaker in the psalm—if Christ be not, in some real sense, the speaker in it also. Finally, we are taught in the same epistle to recognize a fulfilment of the psalmist's most terrible imprecations in the judicial blindness which befell the body of the Jewish nation after the crucifixion of Christ. All this proves that if we are not to reject the authority of the apostles and of Christ himself, we must take this imprecatory psalm as having been spoken by David as the ancestor and type of Christ. I do not say that the circumstance that these psalms are so unequivocally endorsed and appropriated by our blessed Lord explains the difficulty they involve. But I am sure that the simple statement of it will constrain disciples of Christ to touch them with a reverent hand; and rather to distrust their own judgment than to brand such scriptures as the products of an unsanctified and unchristian temper." See also Fairbairn's *Typology*, i. p. 102. *Plumer* gives the following excellent digest:—The psalm is decidedly Messianic. The only question is whether it is directly and fully prophetic or typical-messianic. There is no valid objection to the admission that in some parts David as a sufferer speaks as a type of Christ, and that in others he rises to the height of unqualified prediction respecting Messiah. Ver. 4 is cited in Jn. xv. 25; ver. 9 in Jn. ii. 17; Rom. xv. 3; ver. 21 in Mat. xxvii. 34, 48; Mark xv. 23; Jn. xix. 28, 29; ver. 22, 23 in Rom. xi. 9, 10; and ver. 25 in Acts i. 16, 20. Sound commentators generally admit that it has its fulfilment in Christ. *Theodoret:* "It is a prediction of the sufferings of Christ, and the final destruction of the Jews on that account." *Calvin:* "David wrote this inspired ode, not so much in his own name, as in the name of the whole church, of whose head he was an eminent type." *Vitringa:* "It is admitted among Christians, that in Ps. lxix. Christ, and Christ as a sufferer, is to be placed before our eyes. We add that it refers to Christ crucified as the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and John apply it." *Fabritius:* "In this psalm David is a figure of Christ." *Alexander:* "The only individual in whom the traits meet is Christ." *Hodge:* "This psalm is so frequently quoted and applied to Christ in the New Testament, that it must be considered as directly prophetical." Similar remarks might be cited from Gill, Anderson, Scott, and others. Calvin's first remark on this psalm is: "There is a close resemblance between this and Ps. xxii." Many others have observed the likeness. This is a composition of great beauty and poetic excellence.

5. *O God, thou knowest my foolishness.* The broad principle laid down in the introduction to Ps. xxii. applies here. The history of prophets and holy men of old is a typical history. They were, it may be said, representative men, suffering and hoping, not for themselves only, but for the nation whom they represented. In their sufferings they were feeble and transient images of the great Sufferer, who by his sufferings accomplished man's redemption: their hopes could never be fully realized but in the issue of his work, nor their aspirations be truly uttered save by his mouth. But confessions of sinfulness and imprecations of vengeance, mingling with these better hopes and aspirations, are a beacon to guide us in

our interpretation. They teach us that the psalm is not a prediction; that the psalmist does not put himself in the place of the Messiah to come. They show us that here, as indeed in all Scripture, two streams, the human and the divine, flow on in the same channel. They seem designed to remind us that if prophets and minstrels of old were types of the great Teacher of the church, yet that they were so only in some respects, and not altogether. They bear witness to the imperfection of those by whom God spake in time past unto the fathers, in many portions and in many ways, even whilst they point to him who is the living Word, the perfect revelation of the Father.—*Perowne.*

PSALM LXXI.

I am much inclined to think that David's was a case of infant regeneration—certainly it was a case of early piety. Touching proof of this is found in Ps. lxxi. The psalm, I am aware, is anonymous, and is therefore by many recent critics referred to some later writer; but I am satisfied that Venema and Hengstenberg have adduced sufficient reasons for retaining the opinion of Calvin and the older expositors, that it is from David's pen, and is the plaintive song of his old age. It shows us the soul of the aged saint darkened by the remembrance of his great transgression, and by the swarm of sorrows with which that sin filled all his later years. But he finds comfort in reverting to the happy days of his childhood, and especially to the irrevocable trust which he was then enabled to repose in God. The thoughts and feelings expressed remind one of those which invest with such a solemn, tender interest the second epistle to Timothy—which embalms the dying thoughts of the great apostle. Like Paul, David takes a retrospect of the Lord's dealings with him from the beginning; and, in effect, declares, with the dying apostle; "I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). Only there is this notable difference between the two, that while Paul gathered confirmation of his faith from the experience of a thirty years' walk with his Lord, David's experience stretched over a tract of more than twice so many years; for it began with his childhood —*Binnie.*

PSALM LXXII.

Solomon is named in the title as the *author* of the psalm. Attempts have been made to no purpose to interpret לשלמה here, as in Ps. cxxvii., in another sense. The ל, when it occurs in the titles, without anything to limit its application, *always* indicates, as here, the author. . . . In favour of the announcement in the title, we have first the remarkably *objective* character of the psalm, common to it with the other writings of Solomon, and in striking contrast to that *flow of feeling*, which forms such a marked feature in the psalms of David. And, in the *second* place, there is also the fact that it is the circumstances of Solomon's time that form the ground-work of the psalm. The references to these circumstances partake too much of an individual character, as will be seen in the progress of our exposition, to admit of our supposing with Stier again that they are *prophetical.* There are no reasons of any importance against considering Solomon as the author. It is maintained by Stier, that on account of the typical reference to Solomon, the authorship is suitable only to David. But, in reply to this, it is sufficient to advert to Ps. ii. and cx., where David himself, out of the grace imparted to him in his contests against the enemies of the kingdom of God, constructs a ladder, by which he rises to the contemplation of the infinitely more glorious victories to be won in battle by his descendant. Why should not Solomon, in like manner, see in his righteous *reign of peace*, a type of the kingdom of the *Prince of peace?—Hengstenberg.*

Two psalms bear Solomon's name in their titles. One of these is the hundred and twenty-seventh, entitled *A Song of Degrees, of Solomon.* . . . Solomon's other psalm is the seventy-second, and here also the traces of his pen are unequivocal. A mistaken interpretation of the note appended to it —"the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,"—led most of the older commentators to attribute the psalm to David, and to suppose that it is a prayer offered in his old age "for Solomon," as the peaceful prince who was to succeed him on the throne. However, it has long been known that the note in question refers to the whole of the preceding portion of the psalter, —much of which was written by Asaph

and the sons of Korah; and there can be no doubt that the title can only be translated "*of* Solomon." So clear are the traces of Solomon's pen, that Calvin—whose sagacity in this kind of criticism has never been excelled—although he thought himself obliged, by the note at the end of the psalm, to attribute the substance of it to David, felt Solomon's touch so sensibly, that he threw out the conjecture that the prayer was the father's, but that it was afterwards thrown into the lyrical form by the son. This is not the place for detailed exposition; I will therefore content myself with remarking that, properly speaking, the psalm is not "for Solomon" at all. If it refers to him and his peaceful reign, it does so only in as far as they were types of the person and kingdom of the Prince of peace. The psalm, from beginning to end, is not only capable of being applied to Christ, but great part is incapable of being fairly applied to any other.—*Binnie.*

Remarking on the opening part of the psalm (ver. 1-4), *Dr. Binnie* again says—"Solomon is certainly here. The psalm is the joint prayer of prince and people, entreating that the new reign may be wise and just, long and happy. But we cannot read it to the end without feeling that, even when it was first sung, the thought of every reflective Israelite must have been carried beyond the young king, who had just entered upon the government, with such honourable aspirations and such a rich dower of wisdom and diversified accomplishment. In Hebrew the optative and future run so much into each other that it is hard to say whether the psalm ought to be translated throughout as a prayer, or ought not rather to be thrown, in the latter part, into the form of a prediction, as it is in the English version. Some, like Hupfeld, make it a prayer throughout, and read it thus:—

Let the kings of Tarshish and the isles render gifts,
Let the kings of Sheba and Saba offer presents.
Yea, let all kings bow themselves down before him,
Let all nations serve him.
For he delivereth the poor when he crieth,
And the afflicted who hath no helper.
—Mr. Perowne's *Translation.*

But even thus rendered, the terms would have been too fulsome for a Bible psalm, if the scope of it had been limited to the person and reign of Solomon. He could not modestly have asked his people to unite with him in offering to God requests of such far-reaching and glorious import, unless he had intended them to be offered in behalf of THE KING in the most comprehensive sense of the term, as including the seed of David for ever, and especially the greater Son of David who was promised to succeed upon the throne. The reference to Christ is of course still more pointed and obvious, if (as seems preferable) the latter part of the psalm be rendered as a prediction. And if those who first made use of the psalm may be presumed to have looked beyond Solomon, what shall we say regarding those who lived to see the kingdom divided and the house of David represented by men like Rehoboam? The psalm, let it be remembered, was not a mere coronation anthem sung once and then forgotten. It was a new song added to the church's Psalter, and continued to be sung in divine worship. We may be sure, therefore, that even if it could be supposed that the people, in the bright morning of Solomon's reign fixed their hopes on him as they sang the psalm, they would cease to do so when their hopes from him and his were so cruelly disappointed. The type would more and more recede from their view, as the temporal glory of David's house waned; and they would come to sing the psalm, very much as we do, with an entire concentration of the thoughts on the Prince of peace."

3-6. *The mountains shall bring peace,* &c. The hills and mountains prominent in Israel's land, the hills and mountains, too, of earth at large, generally so barren, hills and mountains on which the feet of other messengers have often stood (Is. xl. 9), but never any messengers so blessed as those that visit them now; these hills and mountains display the signs of peace, viz. abundant produce, "*because of righteousness*"—because the righteous One has come to dwell in this new earth. Antichrist and all oppressors are overthrown (ver. 4); earth's thick-peopled regions fear him, and shall go on fearing him in peace, so long as sun and moon remain, that sun and moon which at creation's dawn were appointed to light up earth and guide men to keep holy festivals to the Lord. The Lord Jesus is there. Like "plenty-dropping showers" that

reach the very roots of the mown grass (ver. 6), so is he to the earth after it has been shorn by the scythe of war, and every form of ruin and wrath. He revives it, as summer's genial rains cause grass to spring up in new vigour, clothing the soil with a richer and thicker mantle of verdure than before —as Layard tells us how in the season of spring the dusty soil of Mesopotamia will change its aspect, in one night the tame plains turning to a bright scarlet, or to deepest blue, through the burst of flowers, while the meadows put on the emerald green of the most luxuriant pastures, causing even the wild Bedouin, as he riots in the rich herbage and scented air, to exclaim, "What delight has God given us equal to this!"—*A. A. Bonar.*

15. *He shall live.* On ver. 15 a modern translator of the Psalter has appropriately indicated that that which was said to other kings in flattery shall be said to the Messiah in truth: "O King, live for ever." The best commentary on the words "he shall live" is however to be found in the declaration of the glorified Saviour himself in the Apocalypse, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In the words "to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba," it is implied that rich offerings shall be made to him by men of their substance as a testimony of the devotion of their hearts. That "prayer shall be made for him continually," has been verified in the supplications which are being continually poured forth by all Christians for the advancement of his kingdom: and the universal worship of the Christian church has already set the seal of truth to the words, "daily shall he be praised."—*Thrupp.*

Prayer shall be made for him. But *what* should we pray for on his behalf? Our prayers should vary with the state of his cause; but we should always bear four things upon our minds. *First*, the degree of its resources; that there be always a sufficiency of suitable and able instruments to carry on the work. To this the Saviour himself directs us: "The harvest truly is great; but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." *Secondly*, the freedom of its administration; that whatever opposes or hinders its progress may be removed. "Pray ye for us," says the apostle, "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." *Thirdly*, the diffusion of its principles; that they may become general and universal; spreading through every family, neighbourhood, and province, and realm. So prayed of old the pious Jews: "That thy way may be known on earth; thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee." *Fourthly*, the increase of its glory, as well as its extent; that it may abound more in wisdom, purity, spirituality, charity, and zeal; that the light of the moon may be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun be sevenfold as the light of seven days; that for brass he would bring gold; and for iron, silver; and for wood, brass; and for stones, iron. Thus they that make mention of the Lord are to "give him no rest," not only until he "establish," but make Jerusalem a *praise* in the whole earth.—*Jay.*

PSALM LXXIII.

The psalm is very nearly related to Ps. xxxvii. and xlix. as far as its contents are concerned. Amyraldus took quite a correct view as to what *distinguishes* it from these psalms and forms its individual physiognomy. "In Ps. xxxvii. the prophet merely shows how believers ought to conduct themselves when they perceive the prosperity of the ungodly: he himself did not stumble at it. But here Asaph, though a great and pious man, acknowledges that the providence of God in this respect did sometimes appear to him mysterious, and that he felt great difficulty in justifying it. Yea, from the beginning of this psalm we see how he merged out of the deep thoughts into which his spirit, agitated and vexed by doubts, had sunk, until in the end better views obtained the ascendency. . . . He has adopted this method in order that believers might contemplate, as in a picture, the conflict to which at times they are exposed, and might see what weapons they have to seize against the assaults of the flesh."—*Hengstenberg.*

This is one of the twelve psalms which bear the name of Asaph, and we have seen reason to conclude that it came from the pen of Asaph the seer, the great contemporary of David. The theme of it is one to which the prophets and psalmists often revert—the

mystery of God's providence towards the righteous and the wicked. Asaph's faith staggers at the sight of the prosperity of the wicked. They get on in the world. Their forgetfulness of God seems no bar to their success. Beholding them, the saint is tempted to exclaim, My pains have been thrown away; verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. Indeed, he is only restrained from venting these dark atheistic doubts by the apprehension that he may thereby undermine the dearest hopes of some whom he knows to be the generation of God's children. Such is his temptation. He recovers himself in some measure when, retiring from the din and glitter of the world, he goes into the sanctuary of God, and contemplates things as they appear in the serene light that shines there. He now perceives what he had before failed to observe, the goal to which the prosperity of the wicked tends; how they are brought into desolation as in a moment; how their felicity passes away like a dream and gives place to consuming terrors. But the consideration which banishes all envy from his heart is not that of the sad end of the ungodly. It is by a loftier thought that his heart is purged of the perilous stuff with which it is overcharged:—

"Yet as for me, I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand," &c.

What a high estimate of the soul underlies these words with which the saint emerges from the cloud of his temptation! It is as if he had said, "Why should I envy because of the prosperity of the foolish? Why should my faith stagger because a full cup of temporal felicities is occasionally bestowed on them? Wealth, and health, and honour—these are not the objects in which it was ever intended that my soul should find rest and supreme enjoyment. God himself is my soul's fit portion. Seeing then that I have, in the Lord's great mercy, been made heir of that portion, I will make my boast in him, whatever my earthly lot may be. I shall be satisfied with his likeness." It is thus that God would have us arm ourselves against unbelieving thoughts. It is well to be restrained from uttering unworthy suspicions of God by regard to the peace of our Christian acquaintances; it is better to curb envious thoughts by recollecting that godless prosperity is only a smooth road to hell; but it is best of all to be raised above the reach of Satan's fiery darts by the assured persuasion that we possess in God's favour a portion that is richer than a thousand worlds.—*Binnie.*

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God.* In ver. 17 several explain, "till I pressed into the divine secrets." But this explanation is altogether an arbitrary one. The word מקדש signifies always the sanctuary, and is the constant one for the tabernacle and the temple; comp. in reference to the plural, Ps. lxviii. 35. There is no occasion whatever for departing from the fully ascertained and literal sense if we only look upon the sanctuary with the eyes of the pious Israelites of the Old Testament dispensation. The substance of the temple to them was the presence of God, and just on this account, according to their view, any man could externally repair to the temple without being truly in it, and in like manner a man could be truly in it, even when outwardly at a distance from it: compare at Ps. lxiii. 2, and the passages quoted there. The psalmist thus goes here also with *the feet of his heart* into the sanctuary, draws near to God, and gets from this clear fountain the insight which natural reason could not give him.—*Hengstenberg.*

So also *Perowne*, who remarks—"The sanctuary is the place of his teaching; not heaven, as Kimchi and others, but the temple, as the place of his special manifestation, not only by Urim and Thummim, but in direct answer to prayer. There, in some hour of fervent, secret prayer, like that of Hannah (1 Sam. i. 13, comp. Luke xviii. 10), or perhaps in some solemn service, it may have been—who can tell?—through the words of some inspired psalm, a conviction of the truth broke upon him. The word *sanctuary* is in the plural, which is used here, as in Ps. xliii. 3; lxviii. 35, for the singular."

28. *It is good for me to draw near to God.* He was greatly encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him. If *they that are far from God shall perish*, then, 1. Let this constrain us to live in communion with God. If it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man in this life which he should most carefully pursue and secure. "It is best for me to draw near to God, and

to have God draw near to me." The original may take in both. *But for my part* (so I would read it) *the approach of God is good for me.* Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down—That it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, "It is good for *me*." Those are the wise who know what is good for themselves. "*It is good*," says he (and every good man agrees with him in it), "*It is good for me to draw near to God;* it is my duty, it is my interest.—*Henry.*

PSALM LXXIV.

Asaph is named as the author of the psalm. In those psalms which bear his name, we must, when there are no strong reasons against it, conclude that the person meant is the Asaph who lived in the time of David. For that he occupied a prominent place among the sacred poets; and that therefore there must be some of the psalms of his composition, is evident from 2 Chr. xxix. 30, according to which Hezekiah brought into use, in the worship of God, not only the songs of David, but also the songs of Asaph, and where Asaph is named *the Seer*, or *the divinely illuminated*, and from Neh. xii. 46, where the days of the flower of Israelitish sacred poetry are called the days of David and of Asaph. For these reasons, we are perfectly justified in considering this Asaph as the author especially of Ps. l. lxxiii. lxxviii.; and these are altogether well fitted to have procured for him his poetic fame. But *here* we cannot have the least idea of the authorship belonging to David's time. We must not, however, on this account, convict the title of a mistake; for just in proportion as the contents are decidedly and manifestly inconsistent with David's age, was it unlikely that the title would announce that the psalm was composed at that time. Asaph was the *founder* of a family of singers, who went by the name of the *sons of Asaph*, even in the time of Isaiah, compare 2 Chr. xxxv. 15, yea even in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra ii. 41; iii. 10; Neh. vii. 44; xi. 22. That the Holy Ghost, who inspired the founder, continued to exert his influence upon the members of this family from age to age, is manifest from the example of Jehaziel, one of the sons of Asaph in Jehoshaphat's time, on whom the Spirit of the Lord came down in the midst of the assembly, 2 Chr. xx. 14. All the sacred compositions of the different members of this family, from time to time, were designated *songs of Asaph*, just as in the title of Ps. lxii., Jeduthun stands for the Jeduthunic choir. If the family had not possessed a founder so very famous in this department, these psalms, like those which bear the name of the sons of Korah, would have had inscribed on their titles "the sons of Asaph."—*Hengstenberg.*

The PSALMS OF THE CAPTIVITY, strictly so called, fall under three heads, according as they were written in the first anguish of the carrying away, or after the exiles had settled down in their new abodes in Mesopotamia, or when the time fixed for the return drew near.

To the first class belong Ps. lxxiv. and lxxix. In reading them we seem to hear the cry of the people ascending up to heaven as the Chaldeans scale the wall, and fire the city, and desecrate the sanctuary. They are both entitled psalms of Asaph; and the vividness with which they describe the desolations wrought by the Chaldeans, with sword and with fire, leaves the impression that they must have come from the pen of Levites who were eye-witnesses of the dismal scene. In the former of the two, the godly complain that there is "no more any prophet among them, nor any that knows how long." This has led some commentators to think that, whatever may be the true date of the psalm, it cannot refer to the Chaldean invasion: for it is certain that at that epoch the congregation enjoyed the ministry of distinguished prophets, and that Jeremiah, who was one of these, foretold how long the captivity was to last. The occurrence of the complaint is indeed, by some, deemed sufficient to show that the psalm belongs to the age of the Maccabees, and has reference to the sufferings inflicted on the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes. This subject of Maccabean psalms will come up again; meanwhile it is enough to say that the one before us cannot have been written after the captivity, inasmuch as the second temple was never consumed with fire till its final destruction by the Romans. The truth is, that complaints uttered in the first pressure of sore affliction are not to be interpreted too literally. The eye dimmed with sudden tears sees only the dark side of things,

and is unable for a while to do justice to the rays of light which mitigate the darkness of its affliction. That the psalmist's words must be taken with some qualification, is apparent from the fact, that the same complaint which he utters is found in the Lamentations of Jeremiah himself. He was certainly a prophet, and never ceased to see the visions of God; yet he exclaims, "The Lord hath cast off his altar: he hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord," Lam. ii. 8, 9. Let us hear the psalmist:—

> "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?
> Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?"

&c., to ver. 10. Such is the former half of the psalm. The latter half is of a more cheerful tenor. The church remembers God's mighty works in nature and in grace, and her grief is assuaged. With recovered faith she betakes once more to prayer: "Have respect unto the covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."—*Binnie.*

9. *There is no more any prophet.* The expression has without good reason been maintained to favour the Maccabean reference: it is rather against it. For it takes for granted that the people of the Lord had a *little while ago* enjoyed the presence of prophets. It is only of fresh wounds that the psalmist complains, not of the loss of something of which the people had been deprived for a hundred years, and with the want of which they had long since become familiar. The words are to be explained from Ezek. vii. 26, where it is threatened, "and they seek (in vain) the face of the prophet," from Lam. ii. 9, "and their prophets find not the face of the Lord," and from 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 15, according to which Saul got no answer from the Lord through the prophets. Jeremiah did indeed survive the destruction of the temple (and to this reference has been made in support of the Maccabean exposition), but his prophetical office terminated with it. It was assuredly the cessation of his office that more immediately gave occasion to the painful cry: There is no longer any prophet. This standing ruin of the prophetical class proclaimed, even in louder accents than the non-appearance of other prophets, that God was no longer Israel's King. It was necessary, that along with the other signs of the dominion of God, this one also should cease for a long period of time, that the people might be taught how they had treated it, wherein they had offended, and might at the same time be led with tears of repentance to seek its return.—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM LXXV.

There are very decisive reasons for maintaining that the psalm was composed during the time of the Assyrian distress under Hezekiah. The triumphant tone of the psalm does not allow us to descend to the time of the falling, or rather fallen state. Ver. 4-8 render it quite evident that the psalm was called forth by some severe distress on the part of the church of God; compare especially "the wicked of the earth," in ver. 8. We have here, as in Ps. xlvi., a catastrophe of a universal character: according to ver. 3, the whole circle of the earth is shaken, and the whole circle of the earth shall be calmed by the manifestations of might on the part of God. The catastrophe of the Assyrian invasion was the only one of this kind that ever occurred in all history. According to ver. 2 and 3 the people were quieted in the midst of their trouble by an assurance of divine assistance. This happened at the time of the Assyrian invasion by the prophecy of Isaiah. In ver. 6, the places named, from which Israel might possibly obtain human assistance, are the east, west, and south. The omission of the north indicates that the enemy had come from that quarter;—and the Assyrians did make their entrance into Canaan from Syria. To this we may add, that the psalm is closely related to Ps. xlvi. (compare at Ps. iv.), which undoubtedly belongs to the Assyrian period, and that the following psalm, which is also closely related, and is inscribed with the name of Asaph (compare at Ps. lxxiv.), belongs also to the same era.

The question may be asked, Was the psalm composed before or after the Assyrian invasion? Ewald adopts the latter supposition. The inspiration, he supposes, has descried in it the first visible beginning of a great general judgment of God upon all nations. But there are decisive reasons in favour of the *former* view, which indeed would never have been abandoned, had it not been supposed that there was an incongruity in conceiving of a song of triumph

sung by the church *before* the victory, and while the *trouble* was still immediately lying upon her. In the very title, "To the chief musician, destroy not, a psalm of Asaph, a song of praise," the expression, "destroy not" (compare at Ps. lvii. 1), which does *not* occur in Ps. lxxvi., where we find the celebration of the victory, after it had been gained, shows that, under "Lord God, we praise thee," there lies concealed, "Lord, have mercy on us." On the supposition that the psalm was composed after the deliverance had been obtained, there is assuredly too little said about it, and the basis laid for hope in the future is too narrow. The thanksgiving and the praise in ver. 9 are merely promised for *future* assistance—a proof that as yet none had been imparted. Finally, the *following* psalm, which was also composed by Asaph, expresses thanks and joy for the assistance which had been already obtained. The two psalms make up one entire whole, if Ps. lxxv. be considered as a song of triumph over what had been *promised*. —*Hengstenberg*.

The reign of Hezekiah witnessed just such another INVASION and DELIVERANCE as had been seen in Jehoshaphat's time. The facts already noticed remind us that this was the age in which the Assyrian monarchy had attained the highest noon of its splendour. It was at this time that the Assyrian kings were rearing at Nineveh those great palaces, whose sculptured slabs have lately lent a new attraction to the museums of Europe. Shalmanezer, who carried the ten tribes into captivity, had been succeeded by Sennacherib, and the new monarch was resolved to measure his strength with the king of Egypt. That he might leave no hostile fortress to threaten his rear, he determined to capture Jerusalem and remove the people to share the captivity of their brethren. The sacred writers have narrated in great detail the history of this attempt: the impious letter of the Assyrian king; the arrogant pride of Rabshakeh his lieutenant; Hezekiah's prayer as he spread the letter before the Lord in the temple; the comfortable answer sent by Isaiah; the stroke of the angel of the Lord which laid low 180,000 men, the flower of Assyria, in one night; the flight of Sennacherib in shame to his own land. As in Jehoshaphat's time the danger and the deliverance are both of them celebrated in psalms. It is certain that Ps. lxxvi. celebrates the *deliverance;* and Ps. lxxv. bears traces of having been written in the crisis of the *danger*. An unfortunate mistranslation in the second verse of the latter psalm is apt to mislead the reader of the authorized version. The verse expresses *God's* purpose, not the purpose of the psalmist. "When I shall seize the appointed time, I will judge uprightly:" God may hide himself long, but when the fit time, the time of his own appointment, comes, he will make bare his arm in the defence of the oppressed.—*Binnie*.

2. *When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly:* "For I shall *fix a time* when I shall judge righteously." In ver. 2 and 3 we have the grounds of the confidence which the church expressed in ver. 1: God has promised to her his help. Both verses contain the words of God which are uttered in reply to the address of the church: You may well be thus full of my praise, *for*, &c., מוֹעֵד is the point of time which God has fixed for executing his purposes: compare Ps. cii. 13, thou shalt arise and have mercy on Zion, for the time to be gracious to her is come, yea the *set time*, Hab. ii. 3; Dan. viii. 19; xi. 27, 35. To this, God's point of time, the eye of faith should, in the midst of suffering, be steadily directed. *Arnd:* "Our God, who governs the world by his omnipotence and wisdom, has appointed to all things a boundary, and has also fixed a time and an hour for his judgment, and when this comes, he reveals his judgments, and no man can hinder them. God withholds punishment for a very long time, but at last it comes with certainty, and makes no delay. Even the heathen have learned this from experience according to the saying: *sera tamen tacitis pœna venit pedibus*, and also in the words of Val. Maximus, *tarditatem pœnæ gravitate compensat*." That *point of time* comes when the chastisement of the church has been brought to a close: compare Is. x. 12, "And it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work on mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the pride of the king of Assyria."—*Hengstenberg*.

6. *For promotion cometh neither from the east*, &c. Although many attain to exalted stations either by unlawful arts or by the aid of worldly instrumentality, yet that does not happen by

chance; such persons being advanced to their elevated position by the secret purpose of God, that forthwith he may scatter them like refuse or chaff. The prophet does not simply attribute *judgment* to God. He also defines what kind of judgment it is, affirming it to consist in this, that, casting down one man and elevating another to dignity, he orders the affairs of the human race as seemeth good in his sight. I have stated that the consideration of this is the means by which haughty spirits are most effectually humbled; for the reason why worldly men have the daring to attempt whatever comes into their minds is because they conceive of God as shut up in heaven, and think not that they are kept under restraint by his secret providence. In short, they would divest him of all sovereign power, that they might find a free and an unimpeded course for the gratification of their lusts. To teach us then, with all moderation and humility, to remain contented with our condition, the psalmist clearly defines in what the judgment of God, or the order which he observes in the government of the world, consists, telling us that it belongs to him alone to exalt or to abase those of mankind whom he pleases.

From this it follows that all those who, spreading the wings of their vanity, aspire after any kind of exaltation, without any regard to or dependence upon God, are chargeable with robbing him as much as in them lies of his prerogative and power. This is very apparent, not only from their frantic counsels, but also from the blasphemous boastings in which they indulge, saying, Who shall hinder me? What shall withstand me? As if, forsooth! it were not an easy matter for God, with his nod alone, suddenly to cast a thousand obstacles in their way, with which to render ineffectual all their efforts. As worldly men by their fool-hardihood and perverse devices are chargeable with endeavouring to despoil God of his royal dignity, so whenever we are dismayed at their threatenings, we are guilty of wickedly setting limits to the sovereignty and power of God. If, whenever we hear the wind blowing with any degree of violence, we are as much frightened as if we were stricken with a thunderbolt from heaven, such extreme readiness to be thrown into a state of consternation manifestly shows that we do not as yet thoroughly understand the nature of that government which God exercises over the world. We would no doubt be ashamed to rob him of the title of Judge; yea, there is almost no individual who would not shrink with horror at the thought of so great a blasphemy; and yet when our natural understanding has extorted from us the confession that he is the judge and the supreme ruler of the world, we conceive of him as holding only a kind of inactive sovereignty, which I know not how to characterize, as if he did not govern mankind by his power and wisdom.—*Calvin.*

PSALM LXXVI.

There are very satisfactory reasons for referring this psalm, as the translators of the Septuagint and the Vulgate saw, to the Assyrian catastrophe. The preceding psalm was composed in prospect of this, and the psalm before us after its actual commencement.

The enthusiastic feeling, the courageous tone which characterizes the prophecies and also the psalms of the Assyrian period (comp. besides, Ps. lxxv., especially Ps. xlvi.), meets us in this psalm. It celebrates, according to ver. 3, a mighty overthrow of the enemies, which put an end at one blow to the war. This overthrow took place, according to the same verse, *before* Jerusalem; on which Jarchi remarks, that within the whole compass of sacred history there occurs no other example of the overthrow of the enemy *before* Jerusalem. The overthrow took place without any co-operation on the part of the people, and by an immediate exercise of divine omnipotence, ver. 3, 6, and 8, God has manifested himself as one who cuts off the breath of princes, ver. 12: the enemies are not only driven away, they are put to death. The catastrophe is an event in the *world's history:* all the meek of the *earth* are delivered through the judgment of God, ver. 9, the tumultuous *earth* is in consequence of it quieted, ver. 8, and God has manifested himself as terrible to the kings of the *earth*, ver. 12. The exhortation to the heathen to honour God by presents, ver. 11, is in accordance with the narrative as given in 2 Chr. xxxii. 23, that they actually did so in consequence of the destruction of the Assyrian army. —*Hengstenberg.*

Ps. lxxvi. was evidently written in the first flush of the grateful joy with which the marvellous discomfiture of

the Assyrians gladdened every countenance in Jerusalem. It is rendered with such exquisite skill and spirit in the authorized version (and, I may add, in the Scots metrical version also) that citation is unnecessary. Let the reader compare it with the narrative given in Isaiah and the historical books, and he will not marvel that the critics, divided as they are in opinion regarding the origin of so many other psalms, are almost unanimous in connecting this one with the mysterious discomfiture of Sennacherib's host.

To some it may seem that a psalm which originated in an event so marvellous, and which bears such indubitable marks of its origin, must be little adapted for the subsequent use of God's people, and therefore must be out of place in the hymnal of the church catholic. But facts refute such a notion. Times without number the psalm has been sung, as furnishing the fittest expression of the thoughts and feelings of God's people in view of deliverances wrought for them. When the Covenanters at Drumclog closed their ranks to meet the onset of Claverhouse and his dragoons, they sang the opening verses to the tune of Martyrs:—

"In Judah's land God is well known,
His name's in Isr'el great:
In Salem is his tabernacle,
In Zion is his seat.

There arrows of the bow he brake,
The shield, the sword, the war.
More glorious thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far.

Those that were stout of heart are spoiled,
They slept their sleep outright;
And none of those their hands did find
That were the men of might."

A century earlier, in 1588, when the first rumour of the discomfiture of the Spanish Armada reached Edinburgh, and the citizens assembled to render thanks to God, Robert Bruce, addressing them in the West Kirk, took this psalm for his text, and the two noble sermons he preached on the occasion were, from beginning to end, little more than a running commentary on the psalm. And every hearer must have felt that the whole was as appropriate to the circumstances as if the psalm had been written for the occasion.—*Binnie.*

5, 6. *The stout-hearted are spoiled*, &c. It must be acknowledged that these two verses seem, in a very particular manner, to point at the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, when the "stout-hearted," who doubted not of taking and spoiling the holy city, were themselves suddenly "spoiled" of strength and life; they "slept their sleep, and found not their hands;" they awaked not again to the use of their powers and faculties; a rebuking blast was sent from the God of Jacob, under which the flower of Assyria withered in the space of a night, and in the morning was no more; "the horse and his rider were cast into a dead sleep;" they slept the sleep of death. How, in a moment, "were the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" How astonishing the downfal of the tyrant! How complete the triumph of the daughter of Sion! Such will be the destruction of the world; such the salvation of the people of God.—*Horne.*

PSALM LXXVII.

Expositors differ widely on the occasion of the psalm, and the time to which it is to be referred. *Dr. Binnie* refers it to the eve of the captivity. "Ps. lxxvii.—another 'psalm of Asaph'—may with all confidence be likewise referred to the eve of the captivity. From the way in which the psalmist gathers comfort by the recollection of the past, 'the days of old, the years of ancient times,' 'the years of the right hand of the Most High,' it is sufficiently plain that his sorrow, the 'sore which ran in the night and ceased not,' was not a private grief, but flowed from his sympathy with the calamity of Zion. It is pleasant to note here also the continued working of the brotherly love lately rekindled between Israel and Judah. Joseph participated in the redemption from Egypt, and the psalmist calls that fact to mind, that he may comfort himself with the hope that the children of Joseph will be remembered when the Lord shall turn the captivity of his people. 'Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the 'peoples.' Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.'"

[*Close of the psalm.*] There is a day coming when we shall, with Christ our head, sing of the church's safe guidance to her rest, in such strains as these, remembering how often by the way we were ready to ask, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" We are taught by the harp of Asaph in moments of despondency, to "*remember the days of old*,"

and assure ourselves that the God of Israel liveth—the God of the passover night, the God of the Red Sea, the God of the pillar-cloud, the God of Sinai, the God of the wilderness, the God of Jordan—the God, too, we may add, of Calvary, and the God of Bethany, who shall lead us as he led Israel, even when earth shakes again, till that day when he comes to cast some light on "his way that was in the sea, and his paths that were in the great waters, and his footsteps" that were a mystery. Asaph has been the instrument of the Holy Ghost to cheer us here, by bidding us look on this picture of *the righteous One under the cloud recalling to mind the Lord's former doings.—Bonar.*

PSALM LXXVIII.

This psalm appears to have been written after David's elevation to the throne, and perhaps before he was acknowledged by the whole race of Israel, 2 Sam. v. 5. Its design is to impress upon the public mind the true grounds of the transfer which had taken place, of the pre-eminence in Israel, from the tribe of Ephraim to that of Judah, as the execution of a divine purpose long before disclosed, and at the same time a just judgment on the sins committed by the people, under the predominant influence of Ephraim from the time of Joshua to that of Eli. The internal character of the psalm determines its external form, which is simple, and admits of no minute division, beyond that afforded by the historical succession of events, and the logical design of the composition, to prove that the Israelites under the ascendency of Ephraim were similar in character to the elder generation which came out of Egypt.—*Alexander.*

The general object of the psalm is to warn Israel, who had escaped the judgments of God, not to provoke a fresh judgment by a fresh apostasy. The conclusion, however, ver. 65–72, indicates, that besides this general object, the psalmist designed to warn the Israelites against a special sin to which they were peculiarly liable from the circumstances of the times. The danger was, that of not being willing to acquiesce in the divine arrangement, by which the prerogative of Ephraim was transferred to the tribe of Judah, of regarding that as a *usurpation* which was in fact a *divine judgment*, and of rebelling against the sanctuary in Zion and the dominion of David and his tribe. . . .

That the psalm, which in the title is called "An Instruction of Asaph," belonged to the age of David, and was therefore composed by the *famous* Asaph (comp. at Ps. lxxiv.), cannot be considered as doubtful, if we take a correct view of its contents and object. The last matters of *fact* on which the author touches, are the kingdom of David, which by the fut. in ver. 72 is exhibited as still standing, and the settlement of the sanctuary on Zion. His *object* is to warn the people against a *possible* revolt from David and from the sanctuary in Zion; he cannot therefore have possibly composed the psalm after this event had *taken place.* He acts in the prosecution of his object with such great *tenderness*—not naming expressly even once the disruption which it is his purpose to prevent, and making no express mention whatever of any inclination to this, which might exist at the time, but leaving his readers to make for themselves the practical application—that it is obvious that he must have written at a time when it was of importance not to irritate, for fear of increasing the dissatisfaction, by even supposing it to exist, and not to call forth the idea of the disruption, by naming it.—*Hengstenberg.*

64. *Their widows made no lamentation.* This implies the extent of the destruction, and is full of meaning to one who has been in an oriental city during a plague or other devastating calamity. At first the cry of wailing which always follows a death in ordinary circumstances is loud and frequent; but such cries do not increase but subside with the increase of the calamity and desolation. Death becomes a familiar object in every house, and every one absorbed in his own losses has little sympathy to spare for others. Hence the loudest lamentations cease to be noticed, or to draw condoling friends to the house of mourning; and therefore, as well as from the stupefaction of feeling which scenes of continued horror never fail to produce, a new death is received in silence, or only with sighs and tears. In fact all the usual observances are suspended. The dead are carried out and buried without mourning ceremonies, and without the presence of surviving friends, by men who make it an employment to take away the dead, on the backs of mules

or asses, from the homes they leave desolate. We have seen this.—*Kitto.*

70. *He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds.* To apprehend the whole force of this passage to the end of ver. 73, we should recollect some of the peculiar conditions of the ancient pastoral life. The Hebrew patriarchs, and in a great measure their descendants, when settled in Canaan, did not usually intrust their flocks to menials and strangers, but either tended them in person, or intrusted them to their sons or near relations. The flock which David himself tended was that of his father Jesse. In later times the increase of the population and of the town life, led to the use of hired shepherds: but the difference of treatment which the flock received under the differing circumstances was most strongly felt by the Jews, and was on one occasion most pointedly indicated by our Saviour, who, in comparing himself to the shepherd-owner of a flock, says, "I am the good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. *But he that is an hireling*, and not the shepherd, *whose own the sheep are not*, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth. . . . The hireling fleeth *because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep*," Jn. x. 11–13. This position of our Saviour is admirably illustrated by the conduct of David himself, who combated and slew both a lion and a bear in defence of his father's flock, 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35. If, therefore, the sheep under the shepherd-owner may rest in quiet, confident of lacking nothing which the care of that shepherd can provide, how much more he whose Shepherd is the Lord.—*Kitto.*

PSALM LXXIX.

Perowne inclines to the Maccabean origin of this psalm. But there is great force in the argument below:—

This psalm stands nearly related to Ps. lxxiv.; the situation is the same, and they come a good deal in contact as regards the expression. Both psalms refer to the Chaldean devastation. The psalm before us proceeds on the supposition that Ps. lxxiv. had been previously composed, and *supplements* it. In Ps. lxxiv. the *destruction of the sanctuary* was pre-eminently and almost exclusively brought forward; but in Ps. lxxix. it is referred to very briefly, for the purpose of indicating the passages where that psalm is to be brought in, and the other subjects are put in the foreground. There is no good reason for the assertion which has been made, that the psalm before us must have been composed previously to Ps. lxxiv., as the temple is there spoken of as entirely *destroyed*, whereas it is only its *desecration* that is spoken of here. The desecration does not exclude its destruction; the destruction is one of the forms of its desecration. Had the psalmist designed, in allusion to Ps. lxxiv., to speak of the sanctuary in *one single expression*, he could not possibly have found a stronger term than this: the most dreadful thing that can befall the *sanctuary* is that it be *desecrated.* In saying this everything that can be affirmed of it is said.

Several expositors, both ancient and modern, refer the psalm to the time of the Maccabees. But there are quite decisive grounds against this view. First, as it is so closely allied to Ps. lxxiv., the arguments which were *there* adverted to are of force *here.* There are also no traces here of any reference to the special relations of the times of the Maccabees. And there are two circumstances which are not suitable to those times: *the laying of Jerusalem in ruins*, ver. 1, and the mention of *nations* and *kingdoms* in ver. 6 (compare 2 Ki. xxiv. 2), whereas in the time of the Maccabees Judah had to do only with a *single* kingdom. There are also two weighty external reasons. Jeremiah was acquainted with the psalm, and made use of it—comp. at ver. 6, and in 1 Mac. vii. 16 and 17 it is quoted as forming at that time a portion of the sacred volume. It is thus not necessary here to avail ourselves of the general reasons which may be urged against the existence of Maccabean psalms.

The title, "a psalm of Asaph," is confirmed by the fact that the psalm stands closely related to a whole class of psalms which bear in their titles the name of Asaph. Those critics who reject the titles are unable to explain this similarity admitted by themselves, which obtains among all the Asaphic psalms, even among those which were composed at different eras. If we follow the title the reason of this is clear as day. The descendants of Asaph looked upon themselves as the instruments by which the Asaph of David's time, their illustrious ancestor, *continued to speak*, and therefore they very naturally followed

as closely in his footsteps as possible: the later descendants, moreover, would always have the compositions of their more early ancestors before their minds. The unity of the person named in the title limits the unity of character of all these psalms. Any one who composed at his own hand, and did not look at his ancestor, or the early or contemporaneous organs of that ancestor, could not have adopted it.—*Hengstenberg.*

3. *There was none to bury them.* This in the East is no uncommon result of a great mortality, whether from war or from plague. Those who feel the deepest interest in the departed have already died, and strangers are too much absorbed in their own misery to undertake so great a labour. The bodies are therefore left to be devoured by dogs and jackals, or are disposed of by some summary public act. We saw much of this ourselves during the great plague of Baghdad in 1831. At first the people were so shocked at the mortality that they made great efforts to dispose of their dead. We recollect that in one quarter where the dead had accumulated frightfully, all the young men arôse, and in one night buried all the dead. But this effort was not repeated; and at length, as the mortality increased, the survivors could not exert themselves further than to put the dead bodies into the street; or they left them in the houses, and withdrew to other houses which the plague had untenanted. This produced many shocking scenes; and at length the government found it necessary to hire men at a high price, to go through the town every day to collect the dead bodies, and—not to bury them, for there was no strength in the city left for that labour—but to cast them into the river Tigris. It was also noticed there at that time, that as the mortality increased, and a man saw all his household thinned off, his anxiety about the disposal of his own body would become very great—greater it seemed to us than with respect to the question of life or death; and many took extraordinary pains and incurred much expense to secure beforehand the chance of a decent interment as soon as the angel of death should smite them down. —*Kitto.*

PSALM LXXX.

The mention of the three tribes, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh," may perhaps denote that this is a psalm for the northern kingdom. Some have supposed it to be a prayer of the ten tribes in their captivity in Assyria, and it has been conjectured that the inscription of the LXX., ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀσσυρίου, is to be taken in that sense. Calvin, on the other hand, thinks that it is a prayer *for* the ten tribes by a poet of the southern kingdom. He reminds us that even after the disruption prophets were sent from Judah to Israel, and that Amos (vi. 6) rebukes those in Judah who do not "grieve for the wound in Joseph." . . . In the course of time a portion of Benjamin may have become incorporated into the northern kingdom. The children of Rachel, Joseph (=Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin, would naturally be drawn together. Benjamin, the tribe of Saul and Ishbosheth, and at one time the leading tribe, would not readily submit to the supremacy of Judah; a jealousy existed which was not extinguished in David's reign (2 Sam. xix. xx. xxi.), and which may have been revived later. It is moreover in favour of this view, that in the previous verse *Joseph* is mentioned, and not Judah; and hence the whole psalm refers apparently only to the kingdom of Israel.—*Perowne.*

It has long been felt that this psalm must have been written with reference to the gradual desolation of the ten tribes. This was pointed out by Calvin, and he has been followed by the best subsequent expositors. The reference to the ten tribes being evident, the psalm, according to Calvin, is a prayer of Judah for her afflicted sister. There was a time when, as the Lord complains by the prophet Amos (Am. vi. 6), the people of Judah, being "at ease in Zion," were "not grieved for the affliction of Joseph;" there was a time when they would have taken pleasure in the captivity of the northern kingdom, looking upon it as the removal of their rival. But they have been brought to a better mind, and have learned to pray for their brethren. That this represents the general drift of the psalm, is unquestionable. But it would require to be taken with some modification. Those who, like Dr. Hengstenberg, adhere to the letter of Calvin's view, are obliged to maintain that Benjamin, which is named along with Ephraim and Manasseh, belonged to Israel, not to Judah. If the psalm is a prayer for Ephraim, it is a prayer for Benjamin also. We get rid of all this difficulty

if we look on the psalm as the joint prayer of all the tribes; *the prayer in which the house of Joseph and the house of Judah, so long estranged from one another, unite once more in calling on the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.* The psalm has Asaph's name in the superscription, and is inscribed "to the chief musician." It is therefore a song of the temple. What more likely than that it was first sung in the temple in those early years of Hezekiah's reign, when Benjamin found himself once more associated with Ephraim and Manasseh, his mother's sons, in the solemn worship of the Lord; that it is the prayer in which the whole seed of Jacob, now happily restored to complete religious fellowship, united in spreading before the Lord the calamities of the nation, and prayed him to restore them again and cause his face to shine?—*Binnie.*

17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man, &c.* A whole host of expositors unhesitatingly refer this to the Messiah, and among them not a few of distinguished name. We subjoin one or two examples:—

"The man of God's right hand," and "the Son of Man" point out the promised Messiah very clearly.—*Scott.*

Here again the component parts of the name *Benjamin* are introduced as parallels, precisely as in ver. 16 (15). The *man of thy right hand* may either be the man whom thy power has raised up, or the man who occupies the post of honour at thy right hand. That the words were intended to suggest both ideas, is a supposition perfectly agreeable to Hebrew usage. A more doubtful question is that in reference to the first words of the sentence, *let thy hand be upon* him, whether this means in favour or in wrath. The only way in which both senses can be reconciled is by applying the words to the Messiah, as the ground of the faith and hope expressed. Let thy hand fall not on us but on our substitute. Compare the remarkably similar expressions in Acts v. 31.—*Alexander.*

Some think that in ver. 17 they are acknowledging *Messiah*, calling him by the name, "Man of thy right hand," "Branch made strong for thyself." The Chaldee Targum says this is "King Messiah." Others claim these names for Israel; for Israel is God's *Benjamin*, and God's strong rod wherewith to rule the nations. The words are in the original such as surely point to Messiah; for they are not "son of thy right hand," but אִישׁ יְמִינֶךָ, "*Man* of thy right hand," and "*son of man* whom thou hast made strong for thyself," בֶּן אָדָם; in this resembling Ps. viii. 6. Even if the terms were appropriate to Israel as God's favoured people, still there would be here simply an allusion to that fact, while the real possessor of the name is Messiah, God's true Israel. And if so, then ver. 17 is Israel, in the latter day, crying "Hosanna!" to Christ, and so entitled to what his words implicitly promised in Mat. xx. 39—"Thou shalt not see me henceforth TILL thou shalt say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They pray, "*Appoint him* our captain—*let thy hand be upon him*, designating him to his office, as Moses did Joshua," Num. xxvii. 23. And so they may claim to be gathered and blessed with a fuller blessing than their fathers, who, *by the hand of God* upon them, were led up by Ezra (ch. vii. 9), and Nehemiah (ch. ii. 18); for they claim as their leader Messiah, the true Ezra, "Helper," and true Nehemiah, "the Lord's consolation." Is not Ps. cx. 1 of itself sufficient to justify the name, "The man of *thy right hand?*"

"Jehovah, God of hosts, bring us back! Cause thy countenance to shine on us! and we shall be saved" (נִוָּשֵׁעָה, the response to "Hosanna!" הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא). May we not sympathize in these appeals? May we not put in our own case with theirs? Appoint, Lord, Messiah to be *our* Captain, our soul's leader, and we individually shall be saved! We cry "Hosanna!" הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא, and thou wilt give a response that shall make us shout back, נִוָּשֵׁעָה. Yes, thy church in all the earth, Lord God of hosts, with one consent joins in presenting to thee *Israel's pleas for full restoration.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

PSALM LXXXI.

A partial reunion gladdened the whole church in the first year of Hezekiah. The recent captivity of two tribes and a half had weakened the northern kingdom; and Hoshea, who was Hezekiah's contemporary and the last of its kings, was led by a sense of duty to break the evil custom which his predecessors had

inherited from Jeroboam the son of Nebat, "who sinned, and made Israel to sin." He suspended the law against going up to Jerusalem. Hezekiah's posts were permitted to carry to every part of the kingdom the invitation to unite once more with Judah in celebrating the passover in the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel (2 Chr. xxx.) The invitation, scorned by many, was gladly accepted by others; and a passover was celebrated the like of which had not been seen in Israel since the days of Solomon and the undivided kingdom.

So happy a reunion—happy in itself, twice happy as the pledge of the time when Ephraim should no more envy Judah, and Judah no more vex Ephraim, but they should be one stick in the Lord's hand—could not fail to call forth new songs. There is, I think, sufficient ground to attribute to it Ps. lxxxi. It is, obviously and by universal consent, a festal song. The reference to the exodus from Egypt shows that, although framed to suit all the three feasts, it had a special connection with the passover; and the emphatic reminder that the feast had been ordained in *Joseph* for a testimony may be fairly interpreted as pointing to an occasion when Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, participated with Judah in the solemn rite. There is an undertone of sadness towards the end which reminds us that the desolation of the northern kingdom was at hand; but it opens as with a blast of trumpets:—

"Sing aloud unto God our strength," &c.

—*Binnie.*

5. *A language that I understood not.* What was this unknown tongue? Two interpretations have been given. It has been explained (1) *Of the language of the Egyptians*, which was a foreign tongue to the Hebrews, who were "strangers in the land of Egypt." Comp. Ps. cxiv. 1, "the people of strange language," with Deut. xxviii. 49; Is. xxxiii. 19; Jer. v. 15. Accordingly this fact is mentioned as one of the aggravations of their condition in Egypt, like the toiling with "the burden" and "the basket." Calvin, who takes this view, remarks that the redemption of Israel from a people of foreign language was a special mark of God's favour, inasmuch as the want of that common language, which is the bond of society, made foreigner and enemy synonymous terms: "Quia enim lingua est veluti character mentis ac speculum, non secus ac sylvestres ferae, invicem alieni sunt qui carent linguae usu." It is no objection to this view that the words of God follow abruptly. See Ps. lxxv. 2. (2) *Of the voice of God*, a voice which the people had heard as uttered in his judgments upon the Egyptians, and in his covenant made with themselves, but had not understood (comp. Acts vii. 25). This language is there given in substance in a poetical form by the psalmist, who seems suddenly to hear it, and to become the interpreter to his people of the divine voice. He here places in a fresh light, gives a new application to the earlier revelation, the meaning and purpose of which were not then understood.

Hupfeld supposes it to be called an "unknown" language, merely because it is divine, unlike the everyday *known* language of men. Ab. Ezra sees a reference to the words of God uttered on Sinai. So also Delitzsch, who would explain the expression by reference to Exod. vi. 2, &c. "It was the language of a known, and yet unknown God, which Israel heard from Sinai. God, in fact, now revealed himself to Israel in a new character, not only as the Redeemer and Saviour of his people from their Egyptian bondage, but also as their King, giving them a law which bound them together as a people, and was the basis of their national existence."

This latter interpretation, which regards the language here spoken of as the voice of God, and as virtually given in the following verses, is now that most commonly adopted. It is that of Mendelssohn, Ewald, Delitzsch, and Hupfeld.—*Perowne.*

6. The words of God follow without any indication of a change of speakers. The prophet identifies himself with, and becomes the organ of, the divine voice. He reminds Israel of that fact in connection with which the festival was instituted. It is as though, amidst all the gladness of the feast, and all the music and the pomp of its celebration, other thoughts arose, not to check, but to guide the current of a holy exultation. The sound of trumpet and timbrel and sacred song must be hushed while Jehovah speaks, to tell his forgetful people the lesson of their past history associated with that festival, the warning and the expostulation

suggested by their own perverseness. If they would praise him aright, it must be with hearts mindful of his goodness, and sensible of their own unworthiness and ingratitude. For the spirit in which all festivals should be kept, see on the offering of the first-fruits, Deut. xxvi. 1-11.—*Perowne.*

At the first clause of ver. 6, comp. Exod. vi. 6, 7, "I, the Lord, bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians." The basket (דוד) is, according to the parallelism, the *burden-basket.* Baskets of this kind were found in the sepulchral vaults which have been opened in Thebes, of which Rosellini first furnished drawings and descriptions: the Israelites used them for carrying from one place to another the clay and manufactured bricks.—*Hengstenberg.*

The same author, in his *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, has the following remarks illustrative of the allusion in our psalm:—Of the labourers, says Rosellini (describing a picture from a tomb in Thebes), some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with the straw, others are taking the bricks out of the form and placing them in rows, still others, with a piece of wood upon their backs and ropes on each side, carry away the bricks already burned or dried. . . . Their complexion, physiognomy, and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews. Among the Hebrews, four Egyptians are seen: two of them carry a stick in their hand ready to fall upon two other Egyptians, who are here represented like the Hebrews, one of them carrying on his shoulder a vessel of clay, and the other returning from the transportation of brick, carrying his empty vessel to get a new load.

PSALM LXXXII.

Ewald, De Wette, Hitzig, and others suppose the expostulations of the psalm to be addressed, not to Israelitish but to heathen rulers, satraps, &c., by a poet who lived towards the end of the exile in Babylon, and who, witnessing the corruption which was fast undermining the Babylonish empire, lifted up his voice against it. This view rests mainly upon the appeal to God (in ver. 7) as the Ruler and Judge of *all nations*, not of Israel exclusively. But the psalmists so frequently take a wider range than their own nation, so constantly in a true prophetic spirit recognize the special rule and revelation of God in Israel, as only a part of his universal dominion (comp. for instance, Ps. vii. 6-8), that there is no need to depart from the more common view that Israelitish judges are meant; especially as this is confirmed by the general tenor of the psalm. Besides, as Stier and Hupfeld have pointed out, the names, "gods," and "sons of the Highest," are never given to heathen monarchs in Scripture. The former says, "We look in vain for a passage where a heathen king, or even an Israelitish, except David and Solomon as types of the Messiah, is thought worthy of this name (Son of God)."—*Perowne.*

If the psalm was composed in the time of David, in favour of which supposition may be pleaded the prophetic tone peculiar to the Asaph of that period, and against which no tenable ground can be advanced (even Hitzig must allow that there is no allusion of any kind, no late form or connecting particle, no term which could be pronounced as being decidedly of later origin to betray an author belonging to a later age), the psalmist could not, in the first instance, assuredly have referred to the king—a view which is confirmed by the express mention of "the princes" in ver. 7, as compared with "the ancients of his people and the princes thereof" in Is. iii. Still, though the psalm was in the first instance called forth by existing relations, yet being destined for all ages, it undoubtedly admits of being applied to kings in the discharge of their duty as judges, in so far as they are guilty of that perversion of right here imputed to them. . . .

In the law of Moses all those whose office it is to command, to judge, and to arbitrate, all those to whom in any respect reverence and regard is due, are set apart as the representatives of God on earth. The foundation of this is found in the commandment, "Honour thy father and mother," in the Decalogue. It was shown in the *Beitr.* P. iii. p. 605, that this commandment belongs to the first table—thou shalt fear and honour God, first in himself, second in those who represent him on earth—and farther, that the parents are named in it only in an individualizing manner as representatives of all who are possessed of worth, and are worthy of esteem. The direction in Lev. xix. 32 rises on

the foundation of this commandment, where respect for the *aged* appears as the immediate consequence of respect for God, whose eternity was designed to be revered and honoured under the emblem of their old age; also Ex. xxii. 27, according to which we are taught to recognize in governors a reflection of the majesty of God: "thou shalt not revile God, nor curse the ruler of thy people," *i.e.* thou shalt not curse thy ruler (or in any other way dishonour him), for he bears the image of God, and every insult offered to such a representative of God in his kingdom is an insult against God, in him God himself is honoured and revered—comp. 1 Chr. xxix. 23, "and Solomon sat upon the throne of Jehovah." But it was in connection with the office of judge that the stamp of divinity was most conspicuous, inasmuch as that office led the people under the foreground of an humble earthly tribunal to contemplate the background of a lofty divine judgment: "the judgment is God's," Deut. i. 17, whoever comes before it, comes before God, Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 7, 8.

The position assigned to the office of judge must, when properly considered, have exerted a practical influence of a twofold character. It must have filled those who were brought before its tribunal with a sacred reverence for an authority which maintained its right upon earth in the name of God. And on the part of the judges themselves it must have led them to take a lofty view of their calling, it must have called forth earnest efforts to practise the virtues of him whose place they occupied, him "who does not favour princes, and makes no distinction between rich and poor, for they are the work of his hands," Job xxxiv. 19, and it must have awakened a holy fear of becoming liable to his judgment. For there could be no doubt that as they judged in God's stead, the heavenly Judge would not suffer them to go unpunished should they misuse their office, but would in that case come forth from his place, and utter his thundering cry, "How long!" This last idea is expressly brought forward in the law. In Deut. i. 17 solemn admonitions are addressed to judges, grounded on the lofty position assigned to their office—comp. 2 Chr. xix. 6, 7, where Jehoshaphat, with still greater copiousness of detail, addresses the following admonitions to the judges whom he commissioned: —"Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for God, who is with you in the judgment: wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."—*Hengstenberg.*

1. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.* "God sitteth in the assembly of God." It is unquestionably a very unbecoming thing for those whom God has been pleased to invest with the government of mankind for the common good, not to acknowledge the end for which they have been exalted above the others, nor yet by whose blessing they have been placed in so elevated a station; but, instead of doing this, contemning every principle of equity, to rule just as their own unbridled passions dictate. So infatuated are they by their own splendour and magnificence, as to imagine that the whole world was made only for them. Besides, they think that it would derogate from their elevated rank were they to be governed by moderate counsels; and although their own folly is more than enough to urge them on in their reckless career, they notwithstanding seek for flatterers to soothe and applaud them in their vices. To correct this arrogance, the psalm opens by asserting, that although men occupy thrones and judgment-seats, God nevertheless continues to hold the office of supreme ruler. God has made even a heathen and licentious poet bear testimony to this truth:—

> "Regum timendorum in proprios greges,
> Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis,
> Clari giganteo triumpho,
> Cuncta supercilio moventis."
> *Horatii Carm.* lib. iii. od. 1.

> "Kings rule their subject flocks; great Jove
> O'er kings themselves his reign extends,
> Who hurl'd the rebel giants from above;
> At whose majestic nod all nature bends."
> *Boscawen's Translation.*

That the potentates of this world may not arrogate to themselves more than belongs to them, the prophet here erects a throne for God, from which he judges them all, and represses their pride; a thing which is highly necessary. They may indeed admit that they owe their elevation to royal power to the favour of God, and they may worship him by outward ceremonies, but their greatness so infatuates them that they are chargeable with expelling and casting him to a distance from their assembly

by their vain imaginations; for they cannot bear to be subject to reason and laws. Thus the design of the prophet was to deride the madness by which the princes of this world are bewitched in leaving God no place in their assembly. The more effectually to overthrow this irrational self-confidence with which they are intoxicated, civil order is termed *the assembly of God;* for although the divine glory shines forth in every part of the world, yet when lawful government flourishes among men, it is reflected therefrom with pre-eminent lustre. I indeed grant that it is quite common for the Hebrews to adorn with the title of *God* whatever is rare and excellent. But here it would appear from the scope of the passage that this name of the Divine Being is applied to those who occupy the exalted station of princes, in which there is afforded a peculiar manifestation of the majesty of God; even as Solomon in Prov. ii. 17 calls marriage "the covenant of God," from the peculiar sanctity with which that relation is distinguished. In the second clause of the verse it is not material whether we read, *He will judge in the midst of the gods,* or, *He will judge the gods in the midst.* The first construction, however, is the most easy and natural, that, however much the rulers of the world may exalt themselves, they cannot in the least impair the authority of God by divesting him of his sovereignty over them and of the government of all things, which he will ever retain as his inalienable prerogative. But here, as also a little after, the name *gods* is to be understood of *judges,* on whom God has impressed special marks of his glory. To apply it to angels is a fancy too strained to admit of serious consideration.—*Calvin.*

6. *I have said, Ye are gods.* Luther, after giving a picture of the wickedness and profligacy of the great men of his time, remarks: "There existed also among the Jewish people youths of this character, who kept continually in their mouths the saying of Moses in Ex. xxii. 9. They employed this saying as a cloak and shield for their wickedness against the preachers and the prophets; and gave themselves great airs while they said, Wilt thou punish us and instruct us? Dost thou not know that Moses calls us gods? Thou art a rebel, thou speakest against the ordinance of God, thou preachest to the detriment of our honour. Now the prophet acknowledges, and does not deny, that they are gods, he will not be rebellious, or weaken their honour or authority, like the disobedient and rebellious people, or like the mad saints who make heretics and enthusiasts, but he draws a proper distinction between their power and the power of God. He allows that they are gods over men, but not over God himself. It is as if he said, It is true you are gods over us all, but not over Him who is the God of us all. From this we see in what a high and glorious position God intends to maintain the office of the magistracy. For who will set himself against those on whom God bestows his own name? Whoever despises them despises at the same time the true Magistrate, God, who speaks and judges in them and through them, and calls their judgment his judgment. The apostle Paul, Rom. xiii. 2, points out the consequences of this; and experience amply confirms his statement. But again, just as on the one hand he restrains the discontent of the populace, and brings them, on account of it, under the sword and under law, so does he, on the other hand, restrain the magistracy, that it shall not abuse such majesty and power for wickedness, but employ it in the promotion and maintenance of peace. But yet only so far, that he will not permit the people to lift up their arm against it, or to seize the sword for the purpose of punishing and judging it. No, that they shall not do; God has not commanded it. He himself, God, will punish wicked magistrates, he will be judge and master over them, he will get at them better than any one else could, as he has done from the beginning of the world."—*Hengstenberg.*

Children of the Most High. It may well make one wonder that he calls such wicked individuals as those whom he here rebukes so sharply, by the name of sons of God or sons of the Highest, since children of God is an appellation which in Scripture is applied to holy believers. Answer—It is just as great a wonder that he should bestow upon such wicked people his own name; yea, it is rather a greater wonder that he should call them gods. But it all lies in the word: I have said. For we have often remarked that the word of God sanctifies and deifies all things to which it is applied. Wherefore we may call such situations as have had impressed upon them the word of God, in every

respect holy divine conditions, although the persons are not holy. Just as father, mother, preacher, minister, &c., are in every respect holy divine situations, although the persons who are in them may be knaves and rogues. Thus, inasmuch as God stamps the office of magistry with his word, magistrates are correctly called gods, and the children of God on account of their divine condition, and the word of God, although they are really vile knaves, as he complains that they are."—*Luther.*

PSALM LXXXIII.

Among those who ascribe the psalm to the age of Jehoshaphat, as Kimchi, De Wette, Hengstenberg, Alexander, &c., Dr. Binnie has also taken his place; and his remarks show how completely he has entered into the spirit of this grand warlike ode. (See Appendix—Ps. xlviii.)

Title. A *song* and *psalm* by Asaph; lively, yet solemn; for there is in it both victory and vengeance. The appeal of last psalm to the Judge, by Asaph, in the name of Messiah and his people, is of the same spirit with this more lengthened and full prayer by the same Asaph. The times are the same. Whatever were the circumstances of the psalmist that furnished an appropriate season in the view of the Spirit of God for giving it to the church—whether such as those of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chr. xx. 14) or not—it seems probable that He who knew men's hearts saw more than once this same hatred to Israel taking the form of a combined conspiracy of all the nations round. Even thus has it been more than once in regard to Britain, the retreat of God's hidden ones; and even thus, were the veil lifted up, might it be found to be true at this hour of the foes of Protestant truth. And yet more shall the latter day bring to view a combination of kings and people against the Lamb and his faithful few —a combination which shall meet with extinction on the plains of Megiddo, most fully realizing the prayer and anticipations of this psalm, ver. 9–11. What a song for days when Antichrist shall be wondered at by all the earth! It is pervaded by a tone of astonishment at the Lord's long-suffering.—*A. A. Bonar.*

3. *Hidden ones.* The safety of God's people does not depend on their number, wit, prowess, or inherent strength, but on him who has made them his *hidden ones.* He that touches them, touches the apple of his eye, Zec. ii. 8. In the time of trouble he shall hide them in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide them, Ps. xxvii. 5. They are in no sense hidden from the notice or care of God, Is. xl. 27; Ps. xxxviii. 9; Hos. v. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19. Nor is their course clandestine or cunning. Their very candour makes them suspected. Though they are not ostentatious, they are not deceitful. Nor do they make a secret of their love to Christ. Nor do they try to hide their sins from the eyes of God, but freely confess and bewail them. They have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and do not walk in craftiness. Nor do they pass through life without a mark upon them. The world fixes its stigma, and God puts his name in their foreheads. They are the light of the world. And yet they are God's hidden ones. They are hid in God. The being, the providence, every perfection of God, and every part of his Word, are chambers where the humble find refuge. See Ps. xxxii. 7; lxxxiv. 11; Prov. xviii. 10. They are God's *hidden ones,* because they are secretly nourished, having meat to eat which the world knows not of. Nor is their true character known, 1 John iii. 1. Nor does any roll of church-membership on earth contain a correct list of their names. They are often hidden under the calumnies, suspicions, and outcries of the wicked. Their best acts are misjudged, and their best qualities misnamed. And they are all hid in Christ, Col. iii. 3, 4. They are all hidden under the shadow of Jehovah's wings. Though unknown, they are yet well known, where it is of most importance to be known.—*Plumer.*

5–8. *For they have consulted together,* &c. *Calvin's* remarks on these verses afford a fine specimen of the Christian adaptation of the psalm to the circumstances of the church and people of God when numerous and fierce enemies are banded together against them:—"The multiplied hosts which united their powers together to oppose the church of God, and to effect her overthrow, are here enumerated. As so many nations, formed into one powerful confederacy, were bent on the destruction of a kingdom not greatly distinguished by its power, the miraculous aid of God was indispensably necessary for the deliver-

ance of a people who, in such extremity, were altogether unable to defend themselves. In circumstances apparently as hopeless good king Asa gave utterance to that truly magnanimous reflection: 'Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God! for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude,' 1 Chr. xiv. 11. The same Spirit who inspired that pious king with such invincible fortitude dictated this psalm for the benefit of the whole church, to encourage her with unhesitating confidence to betake herself to God for aid. And in our own day he sets before us these words, in order that no danger or difficulty may prevent us from calling upon God. When the whole world may conspire together against us, we have as it were a wall of brass for the defence of Christ's kingdom in these words, 'Why do the heathen rage?' &c., Ps. ii. 1.

"It will be in no small degree profitable to us to contemplate this as an example in which we have represented to us, as in a mirror, what has been the lot of the church of God from the beginning. This, if rightly reflected on, will keep us at the present day from being unduly dejected when we witness the whole world in array against us. . . . When we have once arrived at a settled persuasion that no strange thing happens to us, the contemplation of the condition of the church in old time will strengthen us for continuing in the exercise of patience until God suddenly display his power, which is perfectly able, without any created aid, to frustrate all the attempts of the world.

"To remove from the minds of the godly all misgivings as to whether help is ready to be imparted to them from heaven, the prophet distinctly affirms that those who molest the church are chargeable with making war against God, who has taken her under his protection. The principle upon which God declares that he will be our helper is contained in these words, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye,' Zec. ii. 8. And what is said in another psalm concerning the patriarchs is equally applicable to all true believers, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,' Ps. cv. 15. He will have the anointing with which he has anointed us to be, as it were, a buckler to keep us in perfect safety."

PSALM LXXXIV.

A Korahite psalm. See Ps. xlii. xliii.

3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house*, &c. We acknowledge a strong preference for the natural and beautiful rendering of this verse adopted by Calvin, Walford, Thrupp, Bossuet, Adam Clarke, and others—"Even as the sparrow findeth an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, (so I seek) thine altars, O Lord of hosts." The reader will observe that the English version supplies the particle "*even*," and that the above supplement is equally competent, and furnishes the beautiful idea that the saint is drawn to the house of God with a gracious instinct akin to that which draws the wandering bird home to her nest. We subjoin *Walford's* note:—"The common opinion respecting this verse is that it represents sparrows, &c., as building their nests in some parts of the sacred edifices. No other sense can indeed be drawn from the English translation. But there are serious objections to this view of the matter. It is not in the least degree likely that any such lodgments were permitted within these consecrated precincts; and even if they could have been allowed, there seems to be no reason why these birds should prefer this to other more commodious places, where they would not be liable to the disturbance unavoidable here, as the concourse to the house of God was incessant and very great. It is therefore clear that the psalmist expresses in this poetic imagery, his strong desire to be readmitted to the sacred abode. The particles of similitude, "as" and "so," are not indeed in the original text; but there are many instances in which they are omitted in Hebrew, but where it is necessary to supply them in order to make an intelligible version. The sense of the passage thus taken is, As these birds delight in their appropriate abodes, and frequent them with constancy, so it is my earnest wish to be restored to the enjoyments which I have derived from a continued resort to thy house."

Hengstenberg is not materially different:—"Modern expositors have gone astray in consequence of their having unfortunately taken up the idea that the psalm contains the expression of the earnest longings after the temple of

one separated from it. They translate: 'Even the sparrows find an house, and the swallows a nest, for themselves, where they lay their young in thine altars, Jehovah Sabaoth, my King and my God,' and suppose the idea intended to be conveyed is: and are thus happier than I am, who am separated from thy sanctuary. But the thought obtained in this way is one, notwithstanding the defence which has been made of it by De Wette and Maurer, of a trivial character, and unworthy the holy earnestness of Israelitish poetry; a bird certainly was in no very enviable situation which had fixed its place of dwelling and its nest in the house of the Lord. The main thing, moreover, *I am less fortunate than they*, is *wanting*, and added to the passage without any reason whatever. The '*with* thine altars,' instead of 'at,' is very strange, and certainly the unusual אֵת would not have been used for the purpose of avoiding the ambiguity. The birds durst build their nest if generally in the sanctuary, yet certainly not in the neighbourhood of the *altars*. Finally, ver. 4 is not at all suitable, if we suppose that ver. 3 contains a lamentation over absence from the sanctuary; and even ver. 2 can only by a false interpretation be brought in this case into harmony with ver. 3."

6. *Through the valley of Baca.* This verse is extremely obscure; so that no version can be given of it which is entirely free from objection. I take the meaning to be in general this, that the truly pious worshippers of God allowed no inconveniences or difficulties, many of which attended on travelling in Judea, to prevent their attendance on the solemn festivals at Jerusalem; but that, on the contrary, their regard for these sacred rites was such, that the most rugged paths through dry and barren deserts were transformed by their affectionate longing for the presence of God into pleasant ways; the thirsty valleys, irrigated by no streams and ornamented by no verdure, yet became fertile, irriguous, and delightful, by means of the associations which were connected with them in the minds of these devout pilgrims, and through the sacred enjoyments which sprung from the divine influence and favour which were vouchsafed to them. A stanza in Addison's beautiful paraphrase of Ps. xxiii. expresses the precise notion of the psalmist's words:—

"Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious lonely wilds I stray,
His bounty will my pains beguile;
The barren wilderness shall smile;
With sudden green and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around."

—*Walford.*

We give the following from *Dickson* on account of the quaintness and beauty of the style, and the spirituality and elevation of the sentiment:—"In the fifth place he looketh upon their condition who dwell farre off from the tabernacle, who might at least thrice a year come from the farthest corner of the land to keep the solemnities appointed of God; and he counteth them blessed, albeit in their voyage they should endure never so much toile in travelling, and should with difficulty drink their water, either rained down from the clouds, or drawn from a well or cistern digged with much labour: for albeit they should sustaine toile and drought in their way, yet having refreshments one after another, and renewed strength for their journey, they should all come at last to the place of publick ordinances in Sion; and here he describeth the true and blessed Israelites, whether proselytes or borne Jews, resolved to come and appear before the Lord in the appointed solemnities by these six properties: First, they encourage themselves for the journey by hope in God to be furnished with strength: *Blessed is the man* (saith he) *whose strength is in thee.* Next, they are resolved in their heart for all the inconveniences they meet with in the journey, to hold on their course: *In whose heart are the wayes of them.* Thirdly, they do hold on their course through dry and comfortlesse places, which may be called places of *Baca*, or weeping: *They passe through the valley of Baca.* Fourthly, they overcome this difficulty of wanting water, either by digging a well, where they may find water; or by finding some already digged cistern wherein God's providence had reserved some quantity of rain-water for them: *Who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the raine also filleth the pooles.* Fifthly, after refreshment found in their journey, they are encouraged to go on their way, till they need and find some new refreshment, and reparation of their strength: *They go from strength to strength.* Sixthly, these godly travellers all come at length to the place

they aimed at, to *Sion*, where they appear before God in the holy feast, chearful and joyful souls: *Every one of them in Sion appeareth before God.* And therefore doth he call them blessed, because at length they come through all the difficulties to have sweet communion with God. These two degrees of blessed Israelites are so painted out in figurative terms, as they may most easily lead the spiritual eye to the blessednesse which the figure is fit to represent, so that the typical words cannot well be understood, except the spiritual blessednesse be taken along: for there are two degrees of really blessed persons; some are at home already dwelling with God, of whom it may be most solidly said: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee,* which is their perpetual exercise. Others are travellers who are in their way toward heaven, the Lord's house; who indeed despair of their own strength to make out their journey, but their confidence is in God's strength, and their encouragement to set forward is this, that of them it may well be said, *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee:* such men's journey doth take up their heart, the stream of their affections runs thitherward; *In whose heart are the wayes of them.* Those travellers have a wildernesse to go through, a comfortlesse valley wherein they do find matter of mourning and no solid consolation, save that which God doth provide beyond the nature of the place, which God, one way or other, doth furnish unto them, that they shall not fail to have a timous consolation: *Who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the raine also filleth the pooles.* So that albeit God suffer them to thirst, yet he sufferеth them not to want a sufficient measure for bringing them on their way; a strengthening them to go forward: if they misse a well, they shall have a cistern filled with rain from heaven; the measure furnished unto them reneweth their strength after wearinesse, and sufficeth them till they need and meet with another renovation of their strength: *They go from strength to strength.* Not one of those resolute travellers or self-denying persons, relying on God's strength and furniture, do perish by the way, all are upheld and brought forward, till they come where they would be, to enjoy God's presence in *Sion* which is above: *Every one of them,* without exception, *in Sion appeareth before God.*"

10. *I had rather be a door-keeper,* &c. Comp. 1 Chr. ix. 19, where the Korahites are said to be "keepers of gates of the tabernacle; and their fathers keepers of the entry," and the allusion is seen in its true point and beauty.

10, 12. And now, ver. 10, 12, you are made to hear the report of the place given by those who reach it. *Israelites* would thus commend God's holy place to their fellows; but they who reach the kingdom of which all this was the shadow, what would they not say of the glory, and beauty, and bliss, and peace? If a day in the Lord's typical courts was so satisfying, what would be a day in the kingdom? And if *one* day, what the eternal day,—"*dies sempiternus, cui non cedit hesternus, quem non urget crastinus?*" (*August.*)

> "*For the Lord is a sun and shield;*
> *God giveth grace and glory;*
> *The Lord withholds no good*
> *From them that walk uprightly.*"

The Lord is all brightness and no gloom, and all safety. He gives "honour and glory," see Prov. iv. 9, &c. He leaves not one unsatisfied wish. Not one in that kingdom but ever sings (and O that all on earth heard it now!)—"*O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!*" This is the heartfelt utterance of each one that has travelled thither; the testimony ungrudging and unqualified of "*The Righteous One on his way to the city of the living God.*"—*A. A. Bonar.*

PSALM LXXXV.

It is impossible to determine with anything like certainty the date and occasion of this psalm. Expositors are very much divided. Hengstenberg and Alexander agree in thinking that the time of composition cannot be determined. Perowne and Binnie, however, incline to the date of the return from the captivity in Babylon. This opinion seems to carry much probability with it. We abridge the remarks of the first-named writer:—There seems every reason to conclude that this psalm was written after the return of the exiles from the Babylonish captivity. It opens with an acknowledgment of God's goodness and mercy in the national restoration in terms which could hardly apply to any other event. But it passes immediately to earnest entreaty for deliverance from the pressure of existing

evils in language which almost contradicts the previous acknowledgment. First, we hear the grateful confession, "Thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob;" and then we have the prayer, "Turn us, O God of our salvation." If the third verse contains the joyful announcement, "Thou hast withdrawn all thy wrath," &c., the fifth pleads as if no such assurance had been given: "Wilt thou for ever be angry with us? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?"

The most probable way of explaining this conflict of opposing feelings is by referring the psalm to the circumstances mentioned by Nehemiah (chap. i. 3). The exiles on their return, he learned, were "in great affliction and reproach." And when he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem himself, it was only in the midst of perpetual opposition and discouragement (chap. iv.) that he was able to carry on his work of restoration. The bright prospect which was opening before them had been quickly dashed. They had returned, indeed, but it was to a desolate land and a forsaken city, whose walls were cast down, and her gates burned with fire; whilst jealous and hostile tribes were ever on the watch to assail and vex them. Hence it is that the entreaty for mercy follows so hard upon the acknowledgment that mercy has been vouchsafed. Ps. cxxvi. is conceived in a somewhat similar strain. In the latter portion of this psalm (from ver. 8) the present misery is forgotten in the dawning of a glorious future. The prayer has been uttered; the storm of the soul is hushed; in quietness and resignation the psalmist sets himself to hear what God will say, and the divine answer is given, not in form, but in substance, in ver. 9–12. It is a glowing prophecy of Messianic times, most naturally connecting itself with the hopes which the return from Babylon had kindled afresh, and well fitted to enable those who heard it to triumph over the gloom and despondency of the present.

10. *Mercy and truth are met together*, &c. *Calvin* has no doubt that we have here a prophecy concerning the kingdom of Christ. He does not, however, explain the attributes mentioned in the verse as attributes of God meeting in harmony at the cross, or in the person of Christ. He supposes the natural meaning of the passage to be "that mercy, truth, peace, and righteousness will form the grand and ennobling distinction of the kingdom of Christ;"—in other words, that these four virtues shall flourish and rule supreme on the earth. The great commentator however adds—"If any one would rather understand *mercy and truth* as referring to God, I have no disposition to enter into dispute with him." Such an understanding of the passage has prevailed extensively from the days of Augustine downwards. "These words," says *Ralph Erskine*, "may be applied to the happy meeting of graces in men upon the revelation of Christ in the soul, yet I take it mainly to import the happy meeting of perfections in God, to be glorified in the sinner's salvation by Jesus Christ; which is a gloss that no interpreter I have had occasion to consult does neglect or omit: and if any of them should miss it, I think they would miss the very groundwork and foundation of all other happy meetings: 'Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'" *Lowth*, remarking on these two views, justly says that the basis and source of these virtues in the hearts of men on earth is the sacrifice of Christ, by which God is reconciled and his character harmonized in the salvation of men. How admirable is that celebrated personification of the divine attributes by the psalmist! How just, elegant, and splendid does it appear, if applied only according to the literal sense, to the restoration of the Jewish nation from the Babylonish captivity! But if interpreted as relating to that sublimer, more sacred, and mystical sense, which is not obscurely shadowed under the ostensible image, it is certainly uncommonly noble and elevated, mysterious and sublime.

In allusion to this text, the cross of Christ has been quaintly but appropriately styled the *trysting-place* of the divine attributes. The following passage is an earnest and beautiful application of the text in this view:—"Are you afraid that truth and righteousness conspire against you, and hinder mercy and peace from ever meeting with you and embracing you? O no: fear not; only believe that mercy and truth are met together, and that righteousness and peace have kissed each other in Christ. Truth will not stand in the way of mercy, for they have kissed each other. He is indeed an infinitely just God, to take vengeance upon sin: but justice

will not hinder mercy from coming to you: only believe that justice and mercy are reconciled in Christ, so as mercy can vent towards you, to the credit of justice. But, O! may such a black-mouthed sinner as I, as black as hell and the devil, expect a kiss from such an infinitely fair Jesus? Is that to be expected, that such opposites should meet in one another's arms? Yea, man, woman, allow me, a black sinner like yourself, to be the happy messenger, to tell you in God's name, that, be ye as black as you will, such a meeting and embracing betwixt Christ and you is more to be expected than ever men or angels could have expected, that infinite justice and mercy should have met together and kissed each other in a God-man: and this unexpected meeting is the very ground upon which your expectation of a meeting with, and embracement of God in Christ, is to be founded."—*Rev. Ralph Erskine.*[1]

PSALM LXXXVI.

There can be little doubt of the Davidic origin of the psalm. Calvin, Luther, Hengstenberg, Alexander, &c., ascribe it to David; and there is no reason for rejecting the title. "The whole psalm," says *Alexander*, "is called a prayer, because entirely made up either of direct petitions, or of arguments intended to enforce them. The tone and substance of the composition are well suited to David's situation in his days of suffering at the hands of Saul or Absalom, more probably the latter, on account of the repeated allusions to deliverance from former trials of the same kind. Some account for the position of this psalm in the midst of a series inscribed to *the sons of Korah*, by supposing that the latter composed it in the person or the spirit of David. The same hypothesis is used by these interpreters to explain the many forms of expression borrowed from other psalms of David, as if the *sons of Korah* meant to comfort him by the repetition of his own consolatory words in other cases. Comp. 2 Cor. i. 4. The psalm admits of no minute or artificial division."

7. *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee.* This was the wisest thing he could do; and it is the best thing we can do. For, *First*, Prayer is enjoined upon us in trouble. . . . "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." *Secondly*, Prayer is the design of trouble. He does not afflict willingly. . . . It is to bring us to himself. It is to quicken us to pray more frequently, more earnestly—"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early." *Thirdly*, Prayer is the evidence that trouble is sanctified. It is a great thing not to lose a trial. A trial is never neutral in its effect. It always injures or improves. It is worse than nothing when it sends us to the creature, either in a way of accusation or relief. But when we turn to him that smiteth us, and acknowledge that his judgments are right, and cast ourselves at his feet, resolved, if we perish, *there* to die—we need not say with Job, "I am afraid of all my sorrows;" but confess with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." *Fourthly*, Prayer is the solace of trouble. There is some relief in tears, and therefore nature is provided with them. It eases and soothes the bursting heart to pour our grief into the ear of a friend. . . . But how good it is to draw near to God! . . . to pour out our tears unto him, and resemble the child that sobs himself asleep in his mother's arms! *Fifthly*, Prayer is the medium of our deliverance from trouble. For this release we are allowed to be concerned; but we must seek it from God. And in doing this we have not only his power to encourage us, . . . but his goodness and love. . . . Yea, more: we have his faithfulness and truth that we shall not seek him in vain. He has engaged himself to appear to our joy, in his own time and way. He has bound himself and put the bond into our hand; and we can produce and plead it:—"Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him."—*Jay.*

9, 10. *All nations*, &c. Nothing can well exceed the plainness, directness, and precision with which the conversion of the nations is announced. "All nations whom thou hast made shall

[1] It may be mentioned here, as an interesting fact, that Mr. Barnes himself, who has just (Jan. 1871) passed away, preached his last sermon from this noble text,

come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone," Ps. lxxxvi. 9, 10. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee," Ps. xxii. 27. There is no mistaking the meaning of these announcements. They are as unambiguous as anything that can be spoken by the most sanguine advocate of Christian missions in this nineteenth century. Yet they come from the age and the pen of David. By him the Holy Spirit has, for eight and twenty centuries, been bearing witness that God's visible church is destined to embrace all the nations whom God has created on the face of the whole earth. A day is coming when they shall all resort to the Lord's throne, and bow themselves down before him. They have long forgotten him; but they shall one day call to remembrance his claims upon them and will turn to him again, even in the uttermost parts of the earth.—*Binnie.*

11. *Teach me thy way, O Lord.* There is here a beautiful connection. We have a prayer for divine teaching. That prayer springs from a resolute will to walk in the divine truth; otherwise it would be hypocritical and vain. But this walk again can only be secured by unity and simplicity of heart and aim. "*Unite* my heart to fear thy name." The meaning has been well expressed by *Perowne.* He says:—"*Unite my heart*—suffer it no longer to scatter itself upon a multiplicity of objects, to be drawn hither and thither by a thousand different aims, but turn all its powers, all its affections, in one direction, collect them in one focus, make them all one in thee. The prayer derives a special force from the resolve immediately preceding: 'I will walk in thy truth.' The same integrity of heart which made the resolve could alone utter the prayer. The nearest Old Testament parallels are, the 'one heart,' Jer. xxxii. 29; 'And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever;' and the 'whole heart' of love to God, Deut. vi. 5; x. 12. Our Lord teaches us how needful the prayer of this verse is. Compare what he says of 'the single eye;' the impossibility of serving two masters, the folly and wearisomeness of those anxious cares by which men suffer themselves to be hampered and distracted, and in contrast with all this, the exhortation, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God,' &c., Mat. vi. 19-34. See also the history of Martha and Mary, Luke x. 38-42."

PSALM LXXXVII.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the date and occasion of the psalm. *Alexander* and *Hengstenberg* suppose the historical occasion to be the great deliverance from the power of Assyria in the days of Hezekiah. *Calvin* makes it a post-captivity psalm. *Dr. Binnie* refers it to the eve of the captivity. "An attention to the time when this psalm was composed," says *Calvin,* "will contribute in no small degree to a clear understanding of its contents. Although the people had returned from their captivity in Babylon; although the church of God had been again gathered together and united into one body after a long dispersion; although the temple had been rebuilt, the altar set up, and the service of God restored; yet, as of a vast multitude of people there was only a small portion remaining, which made the condition of the church very low and despised, as the number left was daily diminished by their enemies, and as the temple was far inferior in magnificence to what it originally was: all this being considered, the faithful had hardly any ground to entertain favourable hopes as to the future. It certainly seemed impossible that they would ever again be raised to their former state from which they had fallen. There was, therefore, reason to apprehend that the minds of the godly, both from the remembrance of the overthrow which they had already experienced, and from the weight of the present miseries with which they were oppressed, would faint, and finally sink into despair. That they might not succumb under such heavy adversities, the Lord not only promises in this psalm that they would recover what they had lost, but also encourages them in the hope of an incomparable glory with which the church should yet be invested, according to that prophecy of Haggai, ii. 9, 'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.'"

4. *I will make mention of Rahab,* &c. The name of *Rahab* is put for Egypt in many other parts of Scripture; and this signification is very suitable to the

present passage, the object of which is to portray the magnificent amplitude of the church, which as yet was only matter of hope. It is therefore said that those who formerly were deadly enemies, or entire strangers, shall not only become familiar friends, but shall also be ingrafted into one body, that they may be accounted citizens of Jerusalem. In the first clause it is said, *I will make mention of Egypt and Babylon among my household.* In the second, it is added that the Philistines, Tyrians, and Ethiopians, who hitherto had been so much at variance with the people of God, shall now be brought into as cordial harmony with them as if they were Jews by birth. What a glorious distinction of the church, that even those who held her in contempt shall come flocking to her from every quarter, and that those who desired to see her completely cut up and destroyed shall consider it the highest honour to have a place among the number of her citizens, and to be accounted such! All of them shall voluntarily renounce their own countries in which they had before proudly boasted. Wherever they may have been born, whether in Palestine, or Ethiopia, or Tyre, they shall profess themselves citizens of the holy city.—*Calvin.*

5. *And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man,* &c. The phrase "This man and that man" is literally "man and man," or every man, or one man after another, in a series indefinitely extended. The idea is that of immense numbers. *Calvin* gives the sense thus:—It is asserted in the fourth verse, that the new citizens shall be gathered into the church of God from different parts of the world; and here the same subject is prosecuted. Another figure is, however, employed, which is, that strangers by birth shall be accounted among the holy people, just as if they were descended from Abraham. It had been stated in the preceding verse that the Chaldeans and Egyptians would be added to the household of the church; and that the Ethiopians, Philistines, and Tyrians would be enrolled among her children. Now, it is added, by way of confirmation, that the number of the new progeny shall be exceeding great, so that the city which had been for a time uninhabited, and afterwards only half filled with a few people, shall be crowded with a vast population. The prophet Isaiah describes more at length what is here promised in a few words, ch. liv. 1: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear! break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Also, chap. lx. 4, "Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." And in chap. xliv. 5, we meet with almost the same language as in the passage before us, or, at least, what comes very near to it: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

PSALMS LXXXVIII. LXXXIX.

We maintain, says *Hengstenberg*, that the two psalms together, like Ps. ix. and x., xlii. and xliii., and many other pairs of psalms, form one whole consisting of two parts. He adds that the character of a Song of Praise (title) belongs to the *whole* as soon as it is recognized as a whole. The introductory and concluding portions, dark in themselves, are illuminated by the light of a centre-sun. And the design of the whole then becomes manifest, namely, to give instruction how, in circumstances of great distress, to gain the victory over despair by praising God. If we separate Ps. lxxxviii. from Ps. lxxxix. it stands alone in the whole book of Psalms. All expositors remark with one voice, that such a comfortless complaint nowhere else occurs throughout its entire compass. Stier, for example, says: "The most mournful of all the plaintive psalms; yea, so wholly plaintive, without any ground of hope, that nothing like it is found in the whole Scriptures." The fact is all the more striking, that the psalm begins with the words, "O Lord, thou the God of my salvation!" after which one certainly might expect anything else rather than a mere description of trouble, in

which the darkness is thickest at the *close*, contrary to the usual practice; for in all other cases the sun breaks through the clouds at the end, if it had not done so before. The peculiar feature of this psalm is, that it ends entirely in night. The importance of these facts is obvious from the circumstance that *Muntinghe* has been led by them to adopt the idea that the psalm is merely a fragment of a larger one—an idea utterly destitute of probability; for we have no such thing as fragments either in the book of Psalms or indeed within the whole compass of the literature of the Old Testament. As soon as the connection between Ps. lxxxviii. and lxxxix. is acknowledged, the difficulty disappears. The psalmist might, in this case, give free scope in the first part to his pain and lamentation, in obedience to an irresistible impulse of human nature, knowing that in the second part the rising sun of *consolation* would dispel all this darkness.—*Introduction to Ps. lxxxviii.*

The historian of Solomon's reign has preserved the names of some of the sages who graced his court, and who doubtless stood related to him in his studies in much the same way as Asaph and the other Levitical seers to David. The list occurs in the encomium on the wisdom of Solomon, which tells how "he was wiser than all men (that is to say, wiser than all the men of his own age and country); than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about," 1 Ki. iv. 31. Questions not a few have been raised respecting the sages here enumerated—the wise satellites who revolved around the wisest king. Were they of the tribe of Judah, the king's own tribe, as the insertion of their names in 1 Chr. ii. 6 has been thought to imply? Or were they not rather Levites, registered among the families of Judah, because their lot had fallen to them within the inheritance of that tribe? These questions must remain unanswered here. I quote the list at present simply to call attention to the fact that two of the names that occur in it are found also in the superscriptions of Ps. lxxxviii. lxxxix. The former has the singular peculiarity of possessing two superscriptions, for it is entitled both "A song or psalm *of the sons of Korah*," and a psalm "of *Heman the Ezrahite*, to give instruction." The latter is entitled "A psalm of *Ethan the Ezrahite*, to give instruction." Is the coincidence of these names with those of Solomon's sages a mere accident? or are the Heman and Ethan of the superscriptions to be identified with the Heman and Ethan of the history? . . . I can only say that I am satisfied Calvin hit the truth when he conjectured that Ps. lxxxix. was written by some prophet of Solomon's time who lived on into the disastrous reign of Rehoboam; and that it was written to give expression to the sorrowful feelings with which the godly in Judah had witnessed the disruption of the kingdom and the collapse of the short-lived glory of David's house. . . . With regard to Ps. lxxxviii., one must speak with more hesitation. Neither author nor date is at all certain. It is a tearful song; indeed, it stands alone in the Psalter in this respect, that no ray of light breaks the gloom of the suppliant. Were it not that he calls upon God, in the opening verse, as "Jehovah, the God of his salvation," the whole might have seemed the cry of despair rather than of struggling faith. Dr. Hengstenberg, and some other commentators of note, are of opinion that the two psalms go together. If so, we may pretty confidently identify the "Heman the Ezrahite" of the one superscription, and the "Ethan the Ezrahite" of the other, with the Heman and Ethan of Solomon's time. Some go further, and identify them with the Heman and Ethan-Jeduthun, the Levitical seers and psalmists whom David appointed, along with Asaph their kinsman, to preside over the service of song. It is just possible they may be the same; but in that case they must have lived to extreme old age. The forty years of Solomon's reign, in addition to some of the last years of David's, intervened between the establishment of the Levitical choirs and the disruption of the kingdom. However this may be, since Ps. lxxxix. is a voice from the calamitous reign of Rehoboam, the circumstances of its origin must ever invest it with a certain melancholy interest, as being the last utterance of the Holy Spirit, in this kind, for a long time—the last pulsation of the mighty tide of inspired psalmody which commenced to flow when David was anointed at Bethlehem.—*Binnie.*

PSALM LXXXIX.—There is a very

obvious and important observation to be made on the description of the apparent change that had taken place in the conduct of God towards the family and descendants of David. The extraordinary promises which had been given to that prince were certainly not accomplished in the fortunes of his descendants, the kings of Judah; nor shall we be able to discover how the truth of these promises is to be sustained without an admission of their being given in reference to the Messiah, that spiritual King, who "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." When we take the assurances which were made to David, and which pledged to him the perpetuity of his kingdom in this sense, the mystery is disclosed, and the difficulty is completely removed: "the loving-kindness of God has not been withdrawn from him, nor has his faithfulness failed." David has still a royal successor, though the genealogy of his posterity is lost upon earth; a successor who will endure for ever, and whose throne will be perpetuated in glory, not merely as long as the sun and the moon continue, but will still be rising in splendour, when these lights of heaven shall be extinguished, and the new heavens and the new earth shall witness the imperishable glories of the Son of David.—*Walford.*

30–33. *If his children forsake my law,* &c. In ver. 30 and 31 the strongest possible descriptions of sin are designedly chosen in order to express the thought that the substance of the covenant is altogether independent of human conditions, that even the greatest unfaithfulness on the part of man does not alter the faithfulness of God.—In ver. 32 the words themselves do by no means convey the idea of a *slight* punishment; and neither can this be said of the fundamental passage, 2 Sam. vii. 14, "If he (the seed of David, his race) errs, I will visit him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men," *i.e.* with such punishments as all men (because all are sinners) are exposed to, grace shall not remove him from this the common lot of men, he has no commission to sin, contrary to Prov. xxiii. 13, 14, "Withdraw not thy son from chastisement; if thou smitest him with the rod he shall not die, and thou shalt deliver his soul from hell." The alleviating limitation is here first given in ver. 33, as it is in the fundamental passage in ver. 15. The alleviation, however, is not to be misunderstood as if it referred to *individuals* contrary to the nature of the thing, and contrary to the history, according to which annihilating judgments did descend upon the rebellious members of the family of David; but the opposition is of the punishment of sin in the individual, and of grace continually remaining to the *family.* We must not fail to notice that in ver. 33 it is not said: I will not withdraw my mercy from *them,* the sinners, but from *him,* the family as such. Now that the kingdom has passed from the *sinful* to the *holy* seed of David, the direct application of this paragraph has ceased. The case provided for in the promise cannot again occur. Still there exists between Christ and his church a case analogous to that between David and his seed. As David's family was chosen in him (compare 1 Ki. xi. 36; 2 Ki. viii. 19; Is. xxxvii. 35; 2 Chr. vi. 42), so that it always remained in possession of the favour of God, notwithstanding the fall and rejection of many of its individual members, in like manner the church is chosen in Christ, and the sins of its members may hurt *themselves* but cannot injure *it.* Notwithstanding the fall of a whole generation, it always flourishes again, and under the most inexorable judgments which are not removed by the appearance of Christ, but rendered more severe, compassionate grace is always concealed.—*Hengstenberg.*



Notes on the Old Testament

Albert Barnes

PSALMS
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THE BOOK OF PSALMS

PSALM XC.

THIS psalm is one of the most remarkable in the whole collection. It is said, in the title, to be "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "being a Psalm of Moses." The original word—תְּפִלָּה, *tephillah*—means properly (1) intercession, supplication for any one; (2) prayer or supplication in general; (3) a hymn or inspired song. Gesenius, *Lex.* In Ps. lxxii. 20, the word is applied to the whole preceding part of the Book of Psalms,—"The *prayers* of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." The word *prayer* would better represent the nature of the contents of this psalm than the word *psalm*, or *hymn*.

If the author was Moses, then this is the only one of his compositions which we have in the Book of Psalms. We know, from not a few places in the Pentateuch, that Moses was a poet as well as a lawgiver and statesman; and it would not be improbable that there might have been some compositions of his of this nature which were not incorporated in the five books that he wrote, and which would be likely to be preserved by tradition. This psalm bears internal evidence that it may have been such a composition. There is no local allusion which would make it necessary to suppose that it was written at a later period; there is nothing inconsistent with the sentiments and style of Moses in the Pentateuch; there is much that is in accordance with his style and manner; and there were numerous occasions when the sentiments of the psalm would be exceedingly suitable to the circumstances in which he was, and to the train of thoughts which we may suppose to have passed through his mind. The following remarks of Prof. Alexander seem to me to be eminently just and appropriate:—"The correctness of the title which ascribes the psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the law in urging the connexion between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author." As a relic thus of most ancient times,—as coming down from the most remarkable man in the Jewish history, if not in the world,—as well as for its own instructive beauty and appropriateness to all times and lands,—it is a composition of great interest and value.

This psalm is placed at the beginning of the fourth book of the Psalter, according to the ancient traditional division of the Psalms. Or, perhaps, the author of the arrangement—probably Ezra—designed to place this *by itself* between the two great divisions of the book, containing respectively the earlier and the later psalms. It may be regarded, therefore, as "the heart or centre of the whole collection," suggesting thoughts appropriate to the entire current of thought in the book.

The phrase, "the man of God," in the title, is given to Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 1; Josh. xiv. 6; Ezra iii. 2, as a title especially appropriate to him, denoting that he was faithful to God; that he was a man approved by God. The title is indeed given to others, Judges xiii. 6, 8; 1 Sam. ii. 27; ix. 6-8; 1 Kings xii. 22, *et al.*; but there was a peculiar appropriateness in the title as given to Moses on account of his character, his eminent rank, and his influence in founding the Hebrew commonwealth.

It is impossible, of course, now to determine the time when the psalm was composed, but it may not improbably be supposed to have been near the close of the wanderings in the wilderness. The Hebrew people were about to enter the promised land; the generation that came out of Egypt was passing away; Moses himself felt that he was near the end of his course, for he had been apprized that he could not enter the land of promise to

PSALM XC.

A Prayer [1] of Moses, the man *a* of God.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place [b] in [2] all generations.

[1] Or, being a Psalm *of*.
a Deut. xxxiii. 1.

b Ps. lxxi. 3; Ez. xi. 16.
[2] *generation and generation.*

the borders of which he had conducted the people. These things were eminently fitted to suggest such views of the shortness of human life, and of its frailty, as are here presented. At the same time, all these circumstances were fitted to suggest the reference to the future, and the prayer in respect to that future, with which the psalm so beautifully closes. It seems, then, not improper to regard this psalm as one of the last utterances of Moses, when the wanderings of the Hebrew people were about to cease; when an entire generation had been swept off; and when his own labours were soon to close.

The main subject of the psalm is the brevity—the transitory nature—of human life; the reflections on which seem designed to lead the soul up to God, who does not die. The races of men are cut down like grass, but God remains the same from age to age. One generation finds him the same as the previous generation had found him—unchanged, and as worthy of confidence as ever. None of these changes can affect him, and there is in each age the comforting assurance that he will be found to be the refuge, the support, the "dwelling-place" of his people.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. The fact that God is unchanging; that he *is* the refuge of his people, and always *has been;* that from the eternity past to the eternity to come, he is the same,—he alone is God, vers. 1, 2.

II. The frailty of man—the brevity of human life—as contrasted with this unchanging nature—this eternity—of God, vers. 3-11. Man is turned to destruction; he is carried away as with a flood; his life is like a night's sleep; the human race is like grass which is green in the morning and is cut down at evening;—human existence is like a tale that is told—brief as a meditation—and narrowed down to threescore years and ten.

III. A prayer that the living might be able so to number their days—to take such an account of life as to apply the heart to wisdom;—to make the most of life, or to be truly wise, ver. 12.

IV. A prayer for those who were to follow—for the coming generation—that God would continue his favours; that though the present generation must die, yet that God, who is unchanging and eternal, would meet the next generation, and all the generations to come, with the same mercies and blessings, enjoyed by those who went before them,—prolonging these to all future time, vers. 13-17.

The psalm, therefore, has a universal applicability. Its sentiments and its petitions are as appropriate now as they were in the time of Moses. The generations of men pass away as certainly and as rapidly now as they did then; but it is as true now as it was then, that God is unchanging, and that he is the "dwelling-place"—the home—of his people.

1. *Lord.* Not here *Jehovah*, but *Adonai*—אֲדֹנָי. The word is properly rendered *Lord*, but it is a term which is often applied to God. It indicates, however, nothing in regard to his character or attributes except that he is a *Ruler* or *Governor.* ¶ *Thou hast been our dwelling-place.* The LXX. render this, *refuge*—καταφυγή. So the Latin Vulgate, *refugium;* and Luther, *Zuflucht.* The Hebrew word —מָעוֹן, *maon*—means properly a habitation, a dwelling, as of God in his temple, Ps. xxvi. 8; heaven, Ps. lxviii. 5; Deut. xxvi. 15. It also means a den or lair for wild beasts, Nah. ii. 12; Jer. ix. 11. But here the idea seems to be, as in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther, *a refuge;* a place to which one may come *as* to his home, as one does from a journey; from wandering; from toil; from danger:—a place to which such a one naturally resorts, which he loves, and where he feels that he may rest secure. The idea is, that a friend of God has that feeling in respect to Him, which one has towards his own home—his abode—the place which he loves and calls his own. ¶ *In all*

2 Before [c] the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, [d] ye children of men.

c Prov. viii. 25, 26.

d Gen. iii. 19.

generations. Marg., *generation and generation.* That is, A succeeding generation has found him to be the same as the previous generation had. *He* was unchanged, though the successive generations of men passed away.

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth.* Before the earth brought forth or produced the mountains. In the description of the creation it would be natural to represent the mountains as the first objects that appeared, as emerging from the waters; and, therefore, as the *first* or *most ancient* of created objects. The phrase, therefore, is equivalent to saying, Before the earth was created. The literal meaning of the expression, "were brought forth," is, in the Hebrew, "were born." The mountains are mentioned as the most ancient things in creation, in Deut. xxxiii. 15. Comp. Gen. xlix. 26; Hab. iii. 6. ¶ *Or ever thou hadst formed.* Literally, "hadst brought forth." Comp. Job xxxix. 1. ¶ *The earth and the world.* The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Gen. i. 1), or from the sea (Gen. i. 10). The term *world* in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as *inhabited,* or as capable of being inhabited,—a dwelling-place for living beings. ¶ *Even from everlasting to everlasting.* From duration stretching backward without limit to duration stretching forward without limit; that is, from eternal ages to eternal ages; or, for ever. ¶ *Thou* art *God.* Or, "Thou, O God." The idea is, that he was always, and ever will be, *God:*—the God; the true God; the only God; the unchangeable God. At any period in the past, during the existence of the earth, or the heavens, or before either was formed, he existed, with all the attributes essential to Deity; at any period in the future—during the existence of the earth and the heavens, or beyond—far as the mind can reach into the future, and even beyond that—he will still exist unchanged, with all the attributes of Deity. The creation of the universe made no change in him; its destruction would not vary the mode of his existence, or make him in any respect a different being. There could not be a more absolute and unambiguous declaration, as there could not be one more sublime, of the eternity of God. The mind cannot take in a grander thought than that there is one eternal and immutable Being.

3. *Thou turnest man to destruction.* In contradistinction from his own unchangeableness and eternity. Man passes away; God continues ever the same. The word rendered *destruction*—דַּכָּא, *dakka*—means properly anything beaten or broken small or very fine, and hence *dust.* The idea here is, that God causes man to return to *dust;* that is, the elements which compose the body return to their original condition, or seem to mingle with the earth. Gen. iii. 19: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The word *man* here, of course, refers to man in general,—all men. It is the great law of our being. Individual man, classes of men, generations of men, races of men, pass away; but God remains the same. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Thou turnest man to *humiliation;*" which, though not the sense of the original, is a true idea, for there is nothing more humiliating than that a human body, once so beautiful, should turn back to dust; nothing more humbling than the grave. ¶ *And sayest, Return,*

4 For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when [1] it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as

[1] Or, *he hath passed* them.

ye children of men. Return to your dust; go back to the earth from which you came. Return, all of you without exception;—kings, princes, nobles, warriors, conquerors; mighty men, captains, and counsellors; ye learned and great, ye honoured and flattered, ye beautiful and gay, ye youthful and vigorous, and ye aged and venerable; whatever is your rank, whatever are your possessions, whatever are your honours, whatever you have to make you lovely, to charm, to please, to be admired; or whatever there is to make you loathsome and detestable; ye vicious, ye profane, low, grovelling, sensual, debased; go all of you alike to *dust!* Oh, how affecting the thought that this is the lot of man; how much should it do to abase the pride of the race; how much should it do to make *any* man sober and humble, that he himself is soon to turn back *to dust*—unhonoured, undistinguished, and undistinguishable dust!

4. *For a thousand years in thy sight.* Heb., "In thy eyes;" that is, It so appears to thee,—or, a thousand years so seem to thee, however long they may appear to man. The utmost length to which the life of man has reached—in the case of Methuselah—was nearly a thousand years (Gen. v. 27); and the idea here is, that the longest human life, even if it should be lengthened out to a thousand years, would be in the sight of God, or in comparison with his years, but as a single day. ¶ Are but *as yesterday when it is past.* Marg., "*he hath passed* them." The translation in the text, however, best expresses the sense. The reference is to a single day, when we call it to remembrance. However long it may have appeared to us when it was passing, yet when it is gone, and we look back to it, it seems short. So the longest period of human existence appears to God.

¶ *And* as *a watch in the night.* This refers to a portion of the night,—the original idea having been derived from the practice of dividing the night into portions, during which a watch was placed in a camp. These watches were, of course, relieved at intervals, and the night came to be divided, in accordance with this arrangement, into parts corresponding with these changes. Among the ancient Hebrews there were only three night-watches; the first, mentioned in Lam. ii. 19; the middle, mentioned in Judges vii. 19; and the third, mentioned in Ex. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. xi. 11. In later times—the times referred to in the New Testament—there were four such watches, after the manner of the Romans, Mark xiii. 35. The idea here is not that such a watch in the night would seem to pass quickly, or that it would seem short when it was gone, but that a thousand years seemed to God not only short *as a day* when it was past, but even as the *parts* of a day, or the divisions of a night when it was gone.

5. *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* The original here is a single verb with the suffix—זְרַמְתָּם. The verb—זָרַם, *zaram*—means, to flow, to pour; then, to pour upon, to overwhelm, to wash away. The idea is, that they were swept off as if a torrent bore them from the earth, carrying them away without regard to order, rank, age, or condition. So death makes no discrimination. Every day that passes, multitudes of every age, sex, condition, rank, are swept away and consigned to the grave,—as they *would be* if a raging flood should sweep over a land. ¶ *They are* as *a sleep.* The original here is, *a sleep they are.* The whole sentence is exceedingly graphic and abrupt: "Thou sweepest them away;—a sleep they are,—in the morning,—like grass

with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass
• *which* [1] groweth up.

6 In *f* the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou *g* hast set our iniquities

e Isa. xl. 6. [1] *is changed.*

f Job xiv. 2. *g* Jer. ii. 22.

—it passes away." The idea is that human life resembles *a sleep*, because it seems to pass so swiftly; to accomplish so little; to be so filled with dreams and visions, none of which remain or become permanent. ¶ *In the morning* they are *like grass*, which *groweth up*. A better translation of this would be to attach the words "in the morning" to the previous member of the sentence, "They are like sleep in the morning;" that is, They are as sleep *appears* to us in the morning, when we wake from it—rapid, unreal, full of empty dreams. The other part of the sentence then would be, "Like grass, it passeth away." The word rendered *groweth up*, is in the margin translated *is changed*. The Hebrew word—חָלַף, *hhalaph*—means to pass, to pass along, to pass by; to pass on, to come on; also, to revive or flourish as a plant; and then, to change. It may be rendered here, *pass away;* and the idea then would be that they are like grass in the fields, or like flowers, which soon *change* by passing away. There is nothing more permanent in man than there is in the grass or in the flowers of the field.

6. *In the morning it flourisheth.* This does not mean that it grows with any special vigour or rapidity in the morning, as if that were illustrative of the rapid growth of the young; but merely that, in fact, in the morning it is green and vigorous, and is cut down in the short course of a day, or before evening. The reference here is to grass as an emblem of man. ¶ *And groweth up.* The same word in the Hebrew which is used in the close of the previous verse. ¶ *In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.* In the short period of a day. What was so green and flourishing in the morning, is, at the close of the day, dried up. Life has been arrested, and death, with its consequences, has ensued. So with man. How often is this *literally* true, that those who are strong, healthy, vigorous, hopeful, in the morning, are at night pale, cold, and speechless in death! How striking is this as an emblem of man in general:—so soon cut down; so soon numbered with the dead. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 6–8; 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

7. *For we are consumed by thine anger.* That is, Death—the cutting off of the race of man—may be regarded as an expression of thy displeasure against mankind as a race of sinners. The death of man would not have occurred but for sin (Gen. iii. 3, 19; Rom. v. 12); and all the circumstances connected with it,—the fact of death, the dread of death, the pain that precedes death, the paleness and coldness and rigidity of the dead, and the slow and offensive returning to dust in the grave,—all are adapted to be, and seem designed to be, illustrations of the anger of God against sin. We cannot, indeed, always say that death in a specific case is proof of the direct and special anger of God *in that case;* but we can say that death always, and death in its general features, may and should be regarded as an evidence of the Divine displeasure against the sins of men. ¶ *And by thy wrath.* As expressed in death. ¶ *Are we troubled.* Are our plans confounded and broken up; our minds made sad and sorrowful; our habitations made abodes of grief.

8. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* Thou hast arrayed

before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are [1] passed away in thy wrath; we spend

[1] *turned.* [2] Or, *meditation.*

our years as a [2] tale *that is told.*

10 [3] The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if

[3] As for *the days of our years, in them* are *seventy years.*

them, or brought them forth to view, as a *reason* in thy mind for cutting us down. Death may be regarded as proof that God has brought before his mind the evidence of man's guilt, and has passed sentence accordingly. The fact of death at all; the fact that any one of the race dies; the fact that human life has been made so brief, is to be explained on the supposition that God has arrayed before his own mind the reality of human depravity, and has adopted this as an illustration of his sense of the evil of guilt. ¶ *Our secret* sins. Literally, "our secret;" or, that which was concealed or unknown. This may refer to the secret or hidden things of our lives, or to what has been concealed in our own bosoms; and the meaning may be, that God has judged in the case not by external appearances, or by what is seen by the world, but by what *he* has seen in the heart, and that he deals with us according to our real character. The reference is, indeed, to sin, but sin as concealed, hidden, forgotten; the sin of the heart; the sin which we have endeavoured to hide from the world; the sin which has passed away from our own recollection. ¶ *In the light of thy countenance.* Directly before thee; in full view; so that thou canst see them all. In accordance with these, thou judgest man,—and hence his death.

9. *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.* Marg., *turned.* The Hebrew word—פָּנָה, *panah*—means *to turn;* then, to turn *to* or *from* any one; and hence, to turn away as if to flee or depart. Here it means that our days seem to turn from us; to give the back to us; to be unwilling to remain with us; to leave us. This seems to be the fruit or result of the anger of God, as if he were unwilling that our days should *attend* us any longer. Or, it is as if he *took away* our days, or caused them to *turn away,* because he was angry and was unwilling that we should any longer enjoy them. The cutting off of life in any manner is a proof of the Divine displeasure; and in every instance death should be regarded as a new illustration of the fact that the race is guilty. ¶ *We spend our years as a tale* that is told. Marg., *meditation.* The Hebrew word —הֶגְיוֹן, *hegeh*—means properly (*a*) a muttering, or growling, as of thunder; (*b*) a sighing or moaning; (*c*) a meditation, thought. It means here, evidently, *thought;* that is, life passes away as rapidly as *thought.* It has no permanency. It makes no impression. Thought is no sooner come than it is gone. So rapid, so fleeting, so unsubstantial is *life.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate in some unaccountable way render this "*as a spider.*" The translation in our common version, "as a tale that is told," is equally unauthorized, as there is nothing corresponding to this in the Hebrew. The image in the original is very striking and beautiful. Life passes with the rapidity of thought!

10. *The days of our years.* Marg., "As for *the days of our years, in them* are *seventy years.*" Perhaps the language would better be translated: "The days of our years! In them are seventy years;" or, they amount to seventy years. Thus the psalmist is represented as reflecting on human life—on the days that make up the years of life;—as fixing his thought *on* those days and years, and taking the sum of them. The days of our years—what are they? ¶ Are *threescore years and ten.* Not as life originally was, but as it has been narrowed down to about that period;

by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow: for [h] it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

h James iv. 14.

or, this is the ordinary limit of life. This passage proves that the psalm was written when the life of man *had* been shortened, and had been reduced to about what it is *at present;* for this description will apply to man now. It is probable that human life was gradually diminished until it became fixed at the limit which now bounds it, and which is to remain as the great law in regard to its duration upon the earth. All animals, as the horse, the mule, the elephant, the eagle, the raven, the bee, the butterfly, have each a fixed limit of life, wisely adapted undoubtedly to the design for which they were made, and to the highest happiness of the whole. So of man. There can be no doubt that there are good reasons—some of which could be easily suggested—why his term of life is no longer. But, at any rate, it *is* no longer; and *in* that brief period he must accomplish all that he is to do in reference to this world, and all that is to be done to prepare him for the world to come. It is obvious to remark that man has enough to do to fill up the time of his life; that life to man is too precious to be wasted. ¶ *And if by reason of strength,* etc. If there be unusual strength or vigour of natural constitution; or if the constitution has not been impaired or broken by toil, affliction, or vicious indulgence; or if the great laws of health have been understood and observed. Any of these causes may contribute to lengthen out life,—or they may all be combined; and under these, separately or combined, life *is* sometimes extended beyond its ordinary limits. Yet the period of seventy *is* the ordinary limit beyond which few can go; the great mass fall long before they reach that. ¶ *Yet* is *their strength.* Heb., "Their *pride.*" That of which a man who has reached that period *might* be disposed to boast—as if it were owing to himself. There is, at that time of life, as well as at other times, great danger lest that which we have received from God, and which is in no manner to be traced to ourselves, may be an occasion of *pride,* as if it were our own, or as if it were secured by our own prudence, wisdom, or merit. May it not, also, be implied here that a man who *has* reached that period of life,—who has survived so many others,—who has seen so many fall by imprudence, or vice, or intemperance,—will be in special danger of being proud, as if it were by some special virtue of his own that *his* life had been thus lengthened out? Perhaps in no circumstances will the danger of pride be *more* imminent than when one has thus passed safely through dangers where others have fallen, and practised temperance while others have yielded to habits of intemperance, and taken care of his own health while others have neglected theirs. The tendency to pride in man does not die out *because* a man grows old. ¶ *Labour and sorrow.* The word rendered *labour*—עָמָל, *amâl*—means properly *toil;* that is, wearisome labour. The idea here is, that toil then becomes burdensome; that the body is oppressed with it, and soon grows weary and exhausted; that life itself is *like* labour or wearisome toil. The old man is constantly in the condition of one who is weary; whose powers are exhausted; and who feels the need of repose. The word rendered *sorrow*—אָוֶן, *aven*—means properly *nothingness, vanity;* Isa. xli. 29; Zech. x. 2; then, nothingness as to worth, unworthiness, iniquity—which is its usual meaning; Num. xxiii. 21; Job xxxvi. 21; Isa. i. 13; and then, evil, adversity, calamity; Prov. xxii. 8; Gen. xxxv. 18. This latter seems to be the meaning here. It is, that happiness cannot

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

ordinarily be found at that period of life; that to lengthen out life does not add materially to its enjoyment; that to do it, is but adding trouble and sorrow. The ordinary hopes and plans of life ended; the companions of other years departed; the offices and honours of the world in other hands; a new generation on the stage that cares little for the old one now departing; a family scattered or in the grave; the infirmities of advanced years on him; his faculties decayed; the buoyancy of life gone; and now in his second childhood dependent on others as he was in his first;—how little of happiness is there in such a condition! How appropriate is it to speak of it as a time of "*sorrow!*" How little desirable is it for a man to reach extreme old age! And how kind and merciful the arrangement by which man is ordinarily removed from the world before the time of "trouble and sorrow" thus comes! There are commonly just enough men of extreme old age upon the earth to show us impressively that it is not *desirable* to live to be very old; just enough to keep this lesson with salutary force before the minds of those in earlier life; just enough, if we saw it aright, to make us willing to die before that period comes! ¶ *For it is soon cut off*, etc. Prof. Alexander renders this, "For he drives us fast;" that is, God drives us,—or, *one* seems to drive, or to urge us on. The word here used—גָּזַז, *gaz*—is commonly supposed to be derived from גָּזַז, *gazaz*, to cut, as to cut grass, or to mow; and then, to shear, *sc.* a flock,—which is its usual meaning. Thus it would signify, as in our translation, to be cut off. This is the Jewish interpretation. The word, however, may be more properly regarded as derived from גּוּז, *gūz*, which occurs in but one other place, Num. xi. 31, where it is rendered *brought*, as applied to the quails which were *brought* or *driven* forward by the east wind. This word means, to pass through, to pass over, to pass away; and then, to cause to pass over, as the quails were (Num. xi. 31) by the east wind. So it means here, that life is soon passed over, and that we flee away, *as if* driven by the wind; *as if* impelled or urged forward as chaff or any light substance is by a gale.

11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* Who can measure it, or take a correct estimate of it, as it is manifest in cutting down the race of men? If the removal of men by death is to be traced to thine anger,—or is, in any proper sense, an expression of thy wrath,—who can measure it, or understand it? The cutting down of whole generations of men—of nations—of hundreds of millions of human beings—of the great, the powerful, the mighty, as well as the weak and the feeble, is an amazing exhibition of the *power*—of the might—of God; and who is there that can fully understand this? Who can estimate fully the wrath of God, if this is to be regarded as an expression of it? Who can comprehend what this *is?* Who can tell, after such an exhibition, what may be in reserve, or what further and more fearful displays of wrath there may yet be? ¶ *Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* Literally, "And according to thy fear, thy wrath." The word rendered "*fear*" would here seem to refer to the *reverence* due to God, or to what there is in his character to inspire awe:—to wit, his power, his majesty, his greatness; and the sense seems to be that his wrath or anger as manifested in cutting down the race seems to be commensurate with all in God that is vast, wonderful, incomprehensible. As no one can understand or take in the one, so no one can understand or take in the other. God is great in all things; great in

12 So teach *us* to number our days, that we may [1] apply *our* hearts unto [i] wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil.

[1] *cause to come.* [i] Prov. iv. 7.

himself; great in his power in cutting down the race; great in the expressions of his displeasure.

12. *So teach* us *to number our days.* Literally, "To number our days make us know, and we will bring a heart of wisdom." The prayer is, that God would instruct us to estimate our days aright:—their number; the rapidity with which they pass away; the liability to be cut down; the certainty that they must soon come to an end; their bearing on the future state of being. ¶ *That we may apply* our *hearts unto wisdom.* Marg., "*Cause to come.*" We will bring, or cause to come, a heart of wisdom. By taking a just account of life, that we may bring to it a heart truly wise, or act wisely in view of these facts. The prayer is, that God would enable us to form such an estimate of life, that we shall be truly wise; that we may be able to act as if we saw the whole of life, or as we should do if we saw its end. God sees the end—the time, the manner, the circumstances in which life will close; and although he has wisely hidden that from us, yet he can enable us to act *as if* we saw it for ourselves; to have the same objects before us, and to make as much of life, *as if* we saw when and how it would close. If any one knew when, and where, and how he was to die, it might be presumed that this would exert an important influence on him in forming his plans, and on his general manner of life. The prayer is, that God would enable us to act *as if* we had such a view.

13. *Return, O* LORD. Come back to thy people; show mercy by sparing them. It would seem probable from this that the psalm was composed in a time of pestilence, or raging sickness, which threatened to sweep all the people away—a supposition by no means improbable, as such times occurred in the days of Moses, and in the rebellions of the people when he was leading them to the promised land. ¶ *How long?* How long shall this continue? How long shall thy wrath rage? How long shall the people still fall under thy hand? This question is often asked in the Psalms. Ps. iv. 2; vi. 3; xiii. 1, 2; xxxv. 17; lxxix. 5, *et al.* ¶ *And let it repent thee.* That is, Withdraw thy judgments, and be merciful, as if thou didst repent. God cannot literally *repent,* in the sense that he is sorry for what he has done, but he may act *as if* he repented; that is, he may withdraw his judgments; he may arrest what has been begun; he may show mercy where it *seemed* that he would only show wrath. ¶ *Concerning thy servants.* In respect to thy people. Deal with them in mercy and not in wrath.

14. *O satisfy us early with thy mercy.* Literally, "In the morning;" as soon as the day dawns. Perhaps there is an allusion here to their affliction, represented as *night;* and the prayer is, that the morning—the morning of mercy and joy—might again dawn upon them. ¶ *That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* All the remainder of our lives. That the memory of thy gracious interposition may go with us to the grave.

15. *Make us glad according to the days* wherein *thou hast afflicted us.* Let the one correspond with the other. Let our occasions of joy be measured by the sorrows which have come upon us. As our sufferings have been great, so let our joys and

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty [k] of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish [l] thou it.

k Ps. cx. 3.

l Job xxii. 28; Prov. xvi. 3.

triumphs be. ¶ And *the years* wherein *we have seen evil.* Affliction and sorrow. They have been continued through many wearisome years; so let the years of peace and joy be many also.

16. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants.* That is, thy gracious work of interposition. Let us see thy power displayed in removing these calamities, and in restoring to us the days of health and prosperity. ¶ *And thy glory unto their children.* The manifestation of thy character; the display of thy goodness, of thy power, and thy grace. Let this spreading and wasting evil be checked and removed, so that our children may live, and may have occasion to celebrate thy goodness, and to record the wonders of thy love.

17. *And let the beauty of the* LORD *our God be upon us.* The word translated *beauty*—נֹעַם, *noam* —means properly *pleasantness;* then, beauty, splendour; then grace or favour. The Septuagint renders it here, λαμπρότης, *splendour;* and so the Latin Vulgate. The wish is clearly that all that there is, in the Divine character, which is *beautiful,* —which is fitted to win the hearts of men to admiration, gratitude, and love,—might be so manifested to them, or that they might so see the excellency of his character, and that his dealings with them might be such, as to keep the beauty, the loveliness, of that character constantly before them. ¶ *And establish thou the work of our hands upon us.* What we are endeavouring to do. Enable us to carry out our plans, and to accomplish our purposes. ¶ *Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.* The repetition of the prayer here is emphatic. It indicates an intense desire that God would enable them to carry out their plans. If this was written by Moses, we may suppose that it is expressive of an earnest desire that they might reach the promised land; that they might not all be cut down and perish by the way; that the great object of their march through the wilderness might be accomplished; and that they might be permanently established in the land to which they were going. At the same time it is a prayer which it is proper to offer at any time, that God would enable us to carry out our purposes, and that we may be permanently established in his favour.

PSALM XCI.

The author of this psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed, are alike unknown. The psalm has no title; and there are no internal marks by which we can ascertain when, or by whom, it was written. It is very general in its application, and may have been composed with no particular reference to any event occurring at the time, as it is evident that it had no special reference to the circumstances of the writer. Though it follows a psalm composed by Moses, yet there is no reason to suppose that it was written by him, nor is there any particular resemblance to that psalm.

From some things in the psalm, as vers. 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, it would appear to be not improbable that the psalm was composed with reference to some individual who was exposed to temptation, or to danger, either from secret enemies or from pestilence, and that it was intended to assure such an one that there was nothing to be feared if he put his trust in God. There is no evidence that it was designed to refer particularly to the Saviour. It is, indeed, applied to him by Satan in the temptation in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 6); but there is, in that case, no such recognition of its applicability to himself on the part of the Saviour as to justify us in the conclusion that it originally referred to him.

PSALM XCI.

HE that dwelleth [m] in the secret place of the Most High, shall [l] abide under the shadow [n] of the Almighty.

[m] Ps. xxvii. 5.

[l] *lodge.* [n] Ps. lvii. 1.

Its quotation by the tempter is no proof that this was the original reference of the psalm, and the quotation made is one which could be applied to him in the same way as *any* general promise in the Old Testament made to those who trusted in God might have been.

The most remarkable thing in the structure of the psalm is the frequent change of *persons*, leading some to suppose that it may have been composed with a view to its being sung by choirs in alternate responses, and Michaelis has suggested that there were probably *two* such choirs; the one—as in vers. 1, 2—celebrating the praises of those who trusted in God; the other—as in vers. 3 to 8—exciting and encouraging the people to put their trust in God, and suggesting reasons why they should do it. Such a thing is, undoubtedly, possible; but the evidence that this was the intention of the author of the psalm is not clear.

Tholuck has divided the psalm, on the supposition that it was thus intended to be sung by alternate choirs, into portions arranged with that view:—ver. 1, the choir; ver. 2, the response; vers. 3-8, the choir; ver. 9, the response; vers. 10-13, the choir; vers. 14-16, the response. This, however, is quite arbitrary, as it cannot be demonstrated to have been the original design.

This arrangement, however, suggests a good division of the psalm:

I. The general statement of the safety of those who put their trust in God, ver. 1.

II. A responsive declaration of the author of the psalm, that he would make the Lord his refuge, and the Most High his habitation, ver. 2.

III. A statement of the security or benefit of doing this, vers. 3-8.

IV. A responsive declaration—repeated—by the author of the psalm that he would do this; that God *was* his refuge, ver. 9 (part first).

V. A further statement of the benefit of this, vers. 10-13.

VI. A general declaration embracing the sum of all that is said in the psalm, as coming from God himself, containing assurances of his protection to those who thus put their trust in him, and confide in him, vers. 14-16.

This mode of division meets substantially all the changes of *persons* in the psalm, or arranges the different portions of it into parts belonging to the different speakers in the psalm. There is reason to believe that this was the line of thought in the mind of the psalmist, though it is not clear that this was designed to be so used in public responses in singing.

1. *He that dwelleth.* Every one that so dwells. The proposition is universal, and is designed to embrace all who are in this condition. It is true of one; it is true of all. The word rendered *dwelleth* here is a participle from the verb to *sit*, and here means *sitting:* literally, "*sitting* in the secret place," etc. The idea is that of calm repose; of resting; of sitting down,—as one does in his dwelling. ¶ *In the secret place.* On the meaning of this see Notes on Ps. xxvii. 5. Comp. Ps. xxxi. 20; xxxii. 7. Abiding where God abides. The idea is that of having one's home or residence in the most holy place in the tabernacle or the temple, and of sitting with him *in* that sacred place. ¶ *Of the Most High.* Of God, represented as exalted above all; over all the universe. ¶ *Shall abide.* Marg., as in Heb., *lodge.* That is his home,—his resting-place,—where he lodges, or passes the night. He takes up his lodging there; he makes it his home. ¶ *Under the shadow of the Almighty.* Under his protection, as if under his wings. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. This is a general statement, and is designed as an introduction to the whole psalm, or as expressing what the psalm is intended to illustrate, *the blessedness* of the man who thus dwells with God; who makes him his friend; who makes the home of God his home.

2 I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely [o] he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

o Ps. cxxiv. 7.

2. *I will say of the* LORD. I, the psalmist; I will take this to myself; I will endeavour to secure this blessedness; I will thus abide with God. In view of the blessedness of this condition, and with the hope of securing it to myself; I will adopt this resolution as the purpose of my life. It is what I need; it is what my soul desires. ¶ *My refuge and my fortress.* "I will say of Jehovah, *My refuge and my fortress!*" I will address him as such; I will regard him as such. On the meaning of these terms, see Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. ¶ *My God.* I will address him as *my* God; as the God whom alone I worship; as the only being to whom the name *God* can properly be applied; as being to me all that is implied in the word *God.* ¶ *In him will I trust.* I will repose that confidence in him which is evinced by making my home with him, and seeking permanently to dwell with him.

3. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.* The snare or gin set for catching birds; meaning, here, that God would save him from the purposes of wicked men; such purposes as might be compared with the devices employed to catch birds. On the meaning of the figure here used, see Notes on Ps. xviii. 5. ¶ And *from the noisome pestilence.* The *fatal* pestilence; the pestilence that spreads death in its march. That is, he can prevent its coming upon you; or, he can save you from its ravages, while others are dying around you. This promise is not to be understood as absolute, or as meaning that no one who fears God will ever fall by the pestilence,—for good men *do* die at such times as well as bad men; but the idea is, that God *can* preserve us at such a time; and that, as a great law, he will be thus the protector of those who trust him. It is to be remembered that in times of pestilence (as was the case during the prevalence of the Asiatic cholera in 1832 and 1848), very many of the victims are the intemperate, the sensual, the debased, and that a life of this kind is a predisposing cause of death in such visitations of judgment. A large part of those who die are of that number. From the danger arising from *this* cause, of course the virtuous, the temperate, the pious are exempt; and this is *one* of the methods by which God saves those who trust in him from the "noisome pestilence." Religion, therefore, to a considerable extent, constitutes a ground of security at such times; nor is there any reason to doubt that, in many cases also, there may be a special interposition protecting the friends of God from danger, and sparing them for future usefulness. The promise here is substantially that general promise which we have in the Scriptures everywhere, that God is the Protector of his people, and that they may put their trust in him.

4. *He shall cover thee with his feathers*, etc. As the parent bird protects its young. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 11. ¶ *His truth.* His unfailing promise; the certainty that what he has promised to do he will perform. ¶ Shall be thy *shield and buckler.* Literally, "Shield and buckler is his truth." The meaning is, that his pledge or promise would be unto them *as* the shield of the soldier is to him in battle. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 2. The word rendered *buckler* is derived from the verb *to surround*, and is given to

5 Thou shalt [p] not be afraid for the terror by night, *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day,

6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness, *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

[p] Ps. cxxi. 5, 6.

the defensive armour here referred to, because it *surrounds*, and thus *protects* a person. It may apply to a coat of mail.

5. *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.* That which usually causes alarm at night — a sudden attack; an unexpected incursion of enemies; sudden disease coming on by night; or the pestilence which seems to love night, and to "walk in darkness." Any one of these things seems to be aggravated by *night* and *darkness;* and hence we most dread them then. We cannot see their approach; we cannot measure their outlines; we know not the extent of the danger, or what may be the calamity. ¶ Nor *for the arrow* that *flieth by day.* Whether shot from the bow of God—as pestilence and disease; or from the hand of man in battle. The idea is, that he that trusts in God will be calm. Comp. Notes on Ps. lvi. 3.

6. Nor *for the pestilence.* The plague or pestilence was common in Oriental countries. ¶ That *walketh in darkness.* Not that it particularly comes in the night, but that it seems to creep along *as if* in the night; that is, where one cannot mark its progress, or anticipate when or whom it will strike. The laws of its movements are unknown, and it comes upon men as an enemy that suddenly attacks us in the night. ¶ Nor *for the destruction.* The word here used—קֶטֶב, *keteb*—means properly a cutting off, a destruction, as a destroying storm, Isa. xxviii. 2; and then, contagious pestilence, Deut. xxxii. 24. It may be applied here to anything that sweeps away men—whether storm, war, pestilence, or famine. ¶ That *wasteth at noonday.* It lays waste, or produces desolation, at noon; that is, visibly, openly. The meaning is, that whenever, or in whatever form, calamity comes which sweeps away the race,—whether at midnight or at noon,—whether in the form of pestilence, war, or famine,—he who trusts in God need not—will not—be afraid. He will feel either that he will be preserved from its ravages, or that if he is cut off he has nothing to fear. He is a friend of God, and he has a hope of a better life. In death, and in the future world, there is nothing of which he should be afraid. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, strangely enough, "Nor of mischance and the demon of noonday."

7. *A thousand shall fall at thy side.* Though a thousand should fall at thy side, or close to thee. This alludes to the manner in which the pestilence often moves among men. ¶ *And ten thousand at thy right hand.* Comp. Ps. iii. 6. The word *myriad* would better represent the exact idea in the original, as the Hebrew word is different from that which is translated "a thousand." It is put here for any large number. No matter how many fall around thee, on the right hand and the left, you will have nothing to fear. ¶ But *it shall not come nigh thee.* You will be safe. You may feel assured of the Divine protection. Your mind may be calm through a sense of such guardianship, and your very calmness will conduce to your safety. This refers, as remarked above, to a *general* law in regard to the judgments of God. It is true that others, beside the dissipated, vicious, and debased, *may* be the victims; but the great law is that temperance, soberness, virtue, cleanliness, and that regard to comfort and health to which religion and virtue

8 Only [q] with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the Most High, thy habitation,

10 There [r] shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

[q] Prov. iii. 25, 26. [r] Prov. xii. 21.

prompt, constitute a marked security, —so marked as to illustrate the *general* law referred to in the psalm before us.

8. *Only.* That is, This is *all* that will occur to you. The only thing which you have to anticipate is, that you will see how God punishes sinners. ¶ *With thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.* Your own eyes shall see it. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 34. You will see the just punishment of the ungodly, the vicious, the profane, the sensual. You will see what is the proper fruit of their conduct; what is the just expression of the views which *God* takes of their character. This undoubtedly refers to the general principle that there *is* a moral government on earth; that vice is often punished *as such;* that the general course of the Divine dealings is such as to show that God is favourable to virtue, and is opposed to vice. The system is not *complete* here, and there are many things which could not be reconciled with this, if the present world were all, and if there were no future state:—but the course of events indicates the general character of the Divine administration, and what is the tendency of things. The completion—the actual and perfect adjustment—is reserved for a future state. The facts as they occur on earth prove that there *is* an attribute of justice in God; the fact that his dealings here are not wholly and fully in accordance with what justice demands, proves that there will be a state where full justice *will* be done, and where the whole system will be adjusted.

9. *Because thou hast made the* LORD, which is *my refuge.* Literally, "For thou, O Jehovah, [art] my refuge." The Chaldee Paraphrase regards this as the language of Solomon, who, according to that version, is one of the speakers in the psalm: "Solomon answered and said, 'Since thou, O Lord, art my refuge,'" etc. Tholuck regards this as the response of the choir. But this is unnecessary. The idea is, that the psalmist *himself* had made Jehovah his refuge, or his defence. The language is an expression of his own feeling—of his own experience—in having made God his refuge, and is designed here to be a ground of exhortation to others to do the same thing. He could say that he *had* made God his refuge; he could say that God was *now* his refuge; and he could appeal to this—to his own experience—when he exhorted others to do the same, and gave them assurance of safety in doing it. ¶ Even *the Most High thy habitation.* Literally, "The Most High hast thou made thy habitation;" or, thy home. On the word *habitation,* see Notes on Ps. xc. 1. The idea is, that he had, as it were, chosen to abide with God, or to dwell with him—to find his *home* with him as in a father's house. The consequence of this, or the security which would follow, he states in the following verses.

10. *There shall no evil befall thee.* The Chaldee Paraphrase has, "The Lord of the world answered and said, 'There shall no evil befall thee,'" etc. The sentiment, however, is that the psalmist could assure such an one, from his own personal experience, that he would be safe. He had himself made Jehovah his refuge, and he could speak with confidence of the safety of doing so. This, of course, is to be understood as a *general* truth, in accordance with what has been said above. ¶ *Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.* On the word rendered *plague* here נֶגַע, *naiga*—see Notes on Ps. xxxviii. 12; xxxix.

11 For [s] he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

[s] Matt. iv. 6.

13 Thou [t] shalt tread upon the lion and [1] adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I

[t] Job v. 23. [1] Or, *asp.*

11. It is not the same word which is used in ver. 6, and translated *pestilence;* and it does not refer to what is technically called the *plague.* It may denote anything that would be expressive of the Divine displeasure, or that would be sent as a punishment. The word rendered "dwelling" here means a *tent;* and the idea is, that no such mark of displeasure would *abide* with him, or enter his tent as its home. Of course, this also must be understood as a *general* promise, or as meaning that religion would constitute a general ground of security.

11. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee.* Literally, "He will give *command* to his angels." That is, he would instruct them, or appoint them for this purpose. This passage (vers. 11, 12) was applied to the Saviour by the tempter. Matt. iv. 6. See Notes on that passage. This, however, does not prove that it had an original reference to the Messiah; for even if we should suppose that Satan was a correct and reliable expounder of the Scriptures, all that the passage would prove as used by him would be, that the righteous, or those who were the friends of God, might rely confidently on his protection, and that Jesus, if he was of God, might do this as others might. On the sentiment in the passage, to wit, that God employs his angels to protect his people, see Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 7; comp. Notes on Heb. i. 14. ¶ *To keep thee in all thy ways.* To preserve thee wheresoever thou goest.

12. *They shall bear thee up,* etc. As if they took hold of thee, and held thee up, when about to fall. ¶ *Lest thou dash thy foot,* etc. Lest you should stumble and fall. They will protect you so that you may walk safely.

13. *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.* Thou shalt be safe among dangers, *as if* the rage of the lion were restrained, and he became like a lamb, and *as if* the poisonous tooth of the serpent were extracted. Comp. Mark xvi. 18. The word here used to denote the *lion* is a poetic term, not employed in prose. The word rendered *adder* is, in the margin, *asp.* The Hebrew word—פֶּתֶן, *pethen*—commonly means viper, asp, or adder. See Notes on Job xx. 14, 16; comp. Ps. lviii. 4; Isa. xi. 8. It may be applied to any venomous serpent. ¶ *The young lion.* The *young* lion is mentioned as particularly fierce and violent. See Ps. xvii. 12. ¶ *And the dragon,* etc. Heb., תַּנִּין, *tannin.* See Notes on Ps. lxxiv. 13; Job vii. 12; Isa. xxvii. 1. In Ex. vii. 9, 10, 12, the word is rendered serpent (and serpents);—in Gen. i. 21, and Job vii. 12, whale (and whales);—in Deut. xxxii. 33; Neh. ii. 13; Ps. lxxiv. 13; cxlviii. 7; Isa. xxvii. 1; li. 9; Jer. li. 34, as here, dragon (and dragons);—in Lam. iv. 3, sea-monsters. The word does not occur elsewhere. It would perhaps properly denote a sea-monster; yet it may be applied to a serpent. Thus applied, it would denote a serpent of the largest and most dangerous kind; and the idea is, that he who trusted in God would be safe amidst the most fearful dangers,—*as if* he should walk safely amidst venomous serpents.

14. *Because he hath set his love upon me.* Has become attached to me; has united himself with me; is my friend. The Hebrew word expresses the strongest attachment, and is equivalent to our expression—*to fall in love.* It refers here to the

deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He [u] shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I [v] *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16 With [1] long life [w] will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

[u] Isa. lxv. 24. [v] Isa. xliii. 2. [1] *length of days.* [w] Prov. iii. 2; xxii. 4.

fact that God is the object of supreme affection on the part of his people; —and it also here implies, that this springs from their hearts: that they have seen such beauty in his character, and have such strong desire for him, that their hearts go out in warm affection towards him. ¶ *Therefore will I deliver him.* I will save him from trouble and from danger. ¶ *I will set him on high.* By acknowledging him as my own, and treating him accordingly. ¶ *Because he hath known my name.* He has known *me;* that is, he understands my true character, and has learned to love me.

15. *He shall call upon me.* He shall have the privilege of calling on me in prayer; and he will do it. ¶ *And I will answer him.* I will regard his supplications, and will grant his requests. There could be no greater privilege—no more precious promise—than this. ¶ *I* will be *with him in trouble.* I will stand by him; I will not forsake him. ¶ *I will deliver him, and honour him.* I will not only rescue him from danger, but I will exalt him to honour. I will recognize him as my friend, and will regard and treat him as such. On earth he shall be treated as my friend; in another world he shall be exalted to honour among the redeemed, and become the associate of holy beings for ever.

16. *With long life will I satisfy him.* The margin here, is "length of days;" that is, days lengthened out or multiplied. The meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life;—implying (1) that it is natural to desire long life; (2) that long life is to be regarded as a blessing (comp. Prov. iii. 2, 16; Ex. xx. 12); (3) that the tendency of religion is to lengthen out life; since virtue, temperance, regular industry, calmness of mind, moderation in all things, freedom from excesses in eating and in drinking,—to all of which religion prompts, —contribute to health, and to length of days (see Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 12–14; xxxvii. 9; lv. 23); and (4) that a time will come, even under this promised blessing of length of days, when a man will be "satisfied" with living; when he will have no strong desire to live longer; when, under the infirmities of advanced years, and under his lonely feelings from the fact that his early friends have fallen, and under the influence of a bright hope of heaven, he will feel that he has had *enough* of life here, and that it is better to depart to another world. ¶ *And shew him my salvation.* In another life, after he shall be "satisfied" with this life. The promise extends beyond the grave: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." See Notes on 1 Tim. iv. 8. Thus, religion blesses man in this life, and blesses him for ever. In possession of this, it is a great thing to him to live long; and then it is a great thing to die—to go to be for ever with God.

PSALM XCII.

The author of this psalm is not indicated in the title, and it is impossible now to ascertain who he was. Nor can the occasion be determined *when* it was composed. It is of so general a character that it might have been written at any period of the Jewish history; and, so far as the style and the contents are concerned, it may have been written by either of those whose names are attached to the other psalms. That it may have been composed by David, is

PSALM XCII.

A Psalm *or* Song for the sabbath-day.

IT [x] *is a* good *thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High:

2 To show forth thy loving-

[x] Ps. cxlvii. 1.

certainly possible, but of that there is no evidence.

In the title it is called "A Psalm or Song for the sabbath-day;" that is, to be used on the sabbath. The Chaldee Paraphrase has in the title, "Praise and a song which the first man spoke for the sabbath-day." This may indicate that there was an early tradition on this subject; but we have no proof of what would be so interesting a fact, that we have a genuine poetic composition of Adam. The contents are all such as might be properly used on the sabbath, though there is nothing in the psalm that has any *special* reference to the sabbath, or that is derived from the appointment of such a day. It is not improbable, however, that special psalms and hymns were composed with a view to be used on festal occasions; and this, as a psalm of praise, is well adapted still to the services of the sabbath.

The psalmist refers—

I. To the blessedness of praise, or to the propriety of celebrating the praise of God, vers. 1-4.

II. He refers to the works of God as laying the foundation of praise, vers. 5, 6.

III. He refers to the justice of God, or the fact that the wicked, however they may seem to be prospered, will be cut off, vers. 7-9.

IV. He refers to the prosperity and the security of the righteous; to the influence of religion and the favour of God on life, as making it prosperous and happy, and as preparing men to be useful and cheerful in old age, vers. 10-15.

1. It is a *good* thing *to give thanks unto the* LORD. Literally, "Good is it to give thanks unto Jehovah." That is, the act is appropriate; the effect is good. (1) The thing itself is appropriate; for there is much, under all circumstances, to be thankful for:—life, health, food, raiment, air, water, friends, recollections, hopes,—and, above all, the blessings of redemption, and the assurance that we may be happy for ever. Many of these things may be found in the condition of all; but if all else fail, the hope of heaven—the assurance that the Redeemer died—the offer of salvation—cannot fail. That is ours, and cannot be taken away. (2) The effect is good. It is a desirable state of mind. It tends to happiness, contentment, peace. A gloomy mind makes all things around more gloomy; an unthankful mind is an unhappy mind; a murmuring, complaining, dissatisfied mind makes its possessor wretched, and all around him miserable. (3) It is good as it is due to God. For all his favour we should be thankful,—and all that we enjoy is his gift. (4) It tends much to lessen the real troubles and afflictions of life to dwell on those things for which we should be thankful. ¶ *And to sing praises unto thy name.* Unto thee. As this psalm was designed for the "Sabbath-day," this proves that one of the appropriate services of the Sabbath is "*praise.*" It is a day when it is fit to recall the mercies of God to our recollection; and the remembrance of those mercies, and their celebration by appropriate songs, tend to diffuse joy over all the coming days of the week. ¶ *O Most High.* God exalted over all. The fact that he *is* exalted over all—over us—over our friends—over all worlds—is an appropriate thought when we come before him to praise him; appropriate at all times, and in all circumstances of life.

2. *To show forth thy loving-kindness.* To celebrate thy mercy; thy goodness; thy love. ¶ *In the morning.* That is, there is a fitness in doing this in the morning; or, there are special reasons why we should do this at that time. (*a*) We have been preserved through the dangers of the night; dangers when we were asleep, unconscious, and defenceless. (*b*) Life

kindness in the morning, [y] and thy faithfulness [1] every night.

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; [2] upon the harp with [3] a solemn sound.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

[y] Lam. iii. 23.
[1] *in the nights.*
[2] Or, *upon the solemn sound with the harp.*
[3] *Higgaion*, Ps. ix. 16.

is then, as it were, a new gift,—for we are raised from "the image of death"—sleep,—and we should regard life then *as if* we had been raised from the dead. (*c*) To praise God in the morning will have a good influence on us, in promoting cheerfulness; in making us benignant and kind; in preparing us for the toils and trials of the day. There is no better preparation for a day, in view of its burdens, cares, toils, and trials, than a thankful, cheerful mind in the morning. He who begins a day with a sour, a morose, a murmuring, an irritable spirit,—who has been preserved through the night, and sees nothing to be thankful for in the morning,—will be a miserable man through the day, and will make all miserable around him. He who sees nothing to be thankful for in the morning will see nothing to hope for in the day; he who has no gratitude for the past, will have no bright anticipations of the future. ¶ *And thy faithfulness.* Faithfulness in the laws of nature; in thy promises; in thy character: in thy providential dealings with men. ¶ *Every night.* Marg., *in the nights.* The reference is to the return of evening; and the meaning is, that it is a good thing, or that it is appropriate to contemplate the faithfulness of God at the close of every day. (*a*) The mind is then calm, after the toils of the day are over. (*b*) The time—evening—its stillness—its twilight—its approaching darkness,—all is favourable for reflection. (*c*) There is much in every day to be thankful for, and it is well to recall it at night. (*d*) It has a happy effect on the mind when we are about to lie down to rest, to recall the mercies of God; to reflect on what he has done for us; to gather, from his kindness in the past, lessons of confidence and hope for the times to come. We lie down at night more calmly in proportion as we are disposed at the close of a day to think of the mercies which we have received at the hand of God; and the recalling of those mercies to remembrance with the voice, and with instruments of praise, is always an appropriate mode of closing a day.

3. *Upon an instrument of ten strings.* The general idea in this verse is, that instruments *of all kinds* are to be employed in celebrating the praises of God. On the instrument here referred to, see Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2. ¶ *And upon the psaltery.* Or *lyre.* See Notes on Isa. v. 12. The word is there translated *viol.* ¶ *Upon the harp with a solemn sound.* Marg., *upon the solemn sound with the harp.* Prof. Alexander renders this, "On meditation with a harp." On the word rendered *harp*, see Notes on Isa. v. 12. The Hebrew word rendered *solemn sound* is הִגָּיוֹן — *higgaion* — which means properly *murmur;* then, the sound of a harp; and then, meditation. See Notes on Ps. ix. 16. Here the meaning seems to be, "*with murmurs upon the harp;*" that is, with the sound of the harp—its murmuring tones. It does not denote here a distinct instrument of music, but it refers to the tones of the harp: not to the meditations of the mind—of the worshipper—but to the low and gentle sounds of the instrument itself.

4. *For thou,* LORD, *hast made me glad.* Thou hast made me happy; thou hast given me such a state of

5 O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts [z] are very deep.

6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

[z] Isa. lv. 9; Rom. xi. 33.

7 When [a] the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever:

[a] Ps. lxxiii. 18—20; Mal. iv. 1.

feeling as finds an appropriate expression in *praise.* ¶ *Through thy work.* Either the work of *creation,* the finishing of which the Sabbath was designed particularly to commemorate; or the works of God in general,—the universe; or the general dealings of his providence; or some particular interpositions of Providence in his behalf that called for special praise. All these are appropriately combined in the celebrations —the praises—of the Sabbath; to these should be added, as among the most marvellous of his works, and that which furnishes special occasion for praise on the Christian Sabbath, the wonderful work of redemption—that which of all the "works" of God makes a heart rightly affected *most* "glad." ¶ *I will triumph.* I will exult or rejoice. ¶ *In the works of thy hands.* In all thy works; in all that thou hast done.

5. *O* LORD, *how great are thy works!* Comp. Ps. viii. 3; xl. 5. See also Notes on Job xi. 7. The meaning here is this:—The psalmist, on the Sabbath, in giving himself to meditation on the works of God, is overwhelmed with a sense of their vastness, their incomprehensible nature, and the depth of wisdom evinced, far beyond the grasp of man, in what God had done. How soon is man lost; how soon does he get beyond his depth; how soon does he feel that here is greatness which he cannot comprehend, and wisdom which he cannot fathom, and goodness which he cannot appreciate, when he sits down to meditate on the works of God! ¶ And *thy thoughts are very deep.* Comp. Isa. xxviii. 29; Rom. xi. 33, 34. The meaning is, that the plans or the purposes of God, as evinced in the works of creation and providence, are too profound for man to understand them. Who but God himself *can* comprehend them?

6. *A brutish man knoweth not.* A man who is stupid, and who is like the beasts or brutes; that is, a man whose tastes and propensities are like the brutes, or who does not seem to act as if endowed with a rational nature. The idea evidently is, that there are many such men, and that it is not to be wondered at that they have no exalted idea of the greatness of God. As a matter of fact there are many in human form—many made in the image of God—who seem to have no more notion of God, and who see no more wisdom and goodness in his works, than the horse or the ox. Comp. Isa. i. 3. ¶ *Neither doth a fool understand this.* A fool, in the sense that he has been made foolish and stupid by sin; that he does not worship and honour God. He has no right understanding in regard to the Maker and the Governor of the universe.

7. *When the wicked spring as the grass.* When they grow up as plants do; when they seem to flourish and prosper. Comp. Ps. xc. 5, 6; xxxvii. 2, 35, 38. The word *grass* here refers to the vegetable creation generally, embracing plants and flowers of all kinds. ¶ *And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish.* As plants and flowers do. They are like vigorous plants; not like the stunted and dry shrubs of the desert. ¶ It is *that they shall be destroyed for ever.* The meaning here is, not that the *design* of their being thus made to flourish is that they should be destroyed, or that they are made to flourish *for* that purpose, but that

8 But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish: all [b] the workers of iniquity shall be scattered;

10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn: I shall be anointed [c] with fresh oil.

11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies; *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.

b Matt. vii. 23.

c 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20.

such *will be* the result. They will not be made happy in another world by their prosperous and prospered wickedness here, as if God approved of their course; but the end will be that they will be destroyed for ever. The design of the psalmist seems to be to turn the mind from the idea that mere external prosperity is necessarily connected with happiness; or that one who is prospered in this life is on that account safe. There is another world, and *there* ample justice will be done to all. See Ps. lxxiii. 16–20.

8. *But thou*, LORD, art most *high for evermore.* In the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, thou wilt maintain thine own exalted place as a sovereign. Whatever may occur to men, God will maintain this exalted position as supreme over all.

9. *For, lo, thine enemies, O* LORD, *for, lo, thine enemies shall perish.* The repetition of the word "lo" here —*behold!*—is emphatic. The attention of the psalmist was fixed on this as an event which would be sure to occur. It was certain that God would be exalted; it followed from this, that all his enemies would be subdued in order that he *might* be thus exalted. ¶ *All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.* More literally, "shall scatter or disperse themselves;" implying eagerness and activity, as if they were in haste to flee away. The allusion is to an army that is discomfited, disorganized, "demoralized," and scattered; or to chaff that is dispersed by the wind. See Job xxi. 18; Isa. xvii. 13; xxix. 5; Hos. xiii. 3.

10. *But my horn shalt thou exalt.* The horn is a symbol of strength or power (see Notes on Ps. xviii. 2); and the meaning here is, that, while the wicked would be cut off, he would be prospered; that is, he had such confidence that he was the friend of God, that he believed God would honour him and exalt him. The psalmist here speaks of himself not so much with reference to his own particular case, but as the *representative* of the righteous. The idea is, that God will thus exalt *a righteous man.* ¶ *Like* the horn of *an unicorn.* Supposed to be remarkable for the strength of its horn. On the animal here referred to, see Notes on Job xxxix. 9; comp. Ps. xxii. 21. ¶ *I shall be anointed with fresh oil.* Oil pure and sweet; not old and rancid. That is, he would be made happy, cheerful, bright, and prosperous. Anointing with oil in the East was the symbol of all this, or was equivalent to what we mean by putting on gay apparel—holiday apparel. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxiii. 5.

11. *Mine eye also shall see* my desire. That is, I shall be permitted to see the destruction of my foes; I shall be gratified with seeing them overthrown. On the sentiment here expressed, see Notes on Ps. liv. 7; lix. 10. ¶ *On mine enemies.* The word here used—שׁוּרַי, *shur*—occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a lier-in-wait; one who *watches;* one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who *watched* his conduct; who *watched* for his ruin. ¶ And *mine ears,* etc. Literally, "Of those rising up against me, evil-doers, my ear shall hear." He would hear of their ruin; he would hear what he desired to hear.

12 The righteous [d] shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

[d] Ps. lii. 8; Hosea xiv. 5, 6.

12. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.* That is, the beauty, the erectness, the stateliness, the growth of the palm-tree—all this is an emblem of the condition, the prosperity, the happiness of a righteous man. The wicked shall be cut down; but the righteous shall flourish. This image—the comparison of a righteous man to a flourishing, majestic, green, and beautiful tree—is not uncommon in the Scriptures. See Notes on Ps. i. 3; comp. Jer. xvii. 8. On the *palm-tree*, see Notes on Matt. xxi. 8. "The stem," says Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 65) "tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady-love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, 'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love! for delights; this thy stature is like the palm-tree." Cant. vii. 6, 7. The following remarks of Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. pp. 65, 66) will illustrate the passage before us;—"The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century, uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice overmuch in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They 'bring forth fruit in old age.' The allusion to being planted in the house of the Lord is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all 'high places' used for worship. This is still common; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and, being well protected there, they flourish exceedingly. Solomon covered all the walls of the 'Holy of Holies' round about with palm-trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive; the very best emblem, not only of patience in well-doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age—a peaceful end—a glorious immortality." The following cut will furnish an apt representation of the appearance of the tree, and a proper illustration of the beauty of the passage before us. ¶ *He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.* On the cedars of Lebanon, see Notes on Isa. ii. 13. The following remarks by Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. pp. 292, 295), with the accompanying cut, will show the propriety of the image here. "The platform where the cedars stand is more than six thousand feet above the Mediterranean, and around it are gathered the very tallest and grayest heads of Lebanon. The forest is not large—not more than five hundred trees, great and small, grouped irregularly on the sides of shallow ravines, which mark the birthplace of the Khadisha, or Holy River.

"But, though the space covered by them does not exceed half a dozen acres, yet, when fairly within the grove, and beneath the giant arms of those old patriarchs of a hundred generations, there comes a solemn hush upon the soul as if by enchantment. Precisely the same sort of magic spell settles on the spirits, no matter how often you repeat your visits. But it is most impressive in the night. Let us by all means arrange to sleep there. The universal silence is almost painful. The gray old towers of Lebanon, still as a stone, stand all around, holding up the stars of heaven to look at you, and the trees gather like phantoms about you,

and wink knowingly, or seem to, and whisper among themselves you know not what. You become suspicious, nervous, until, broad awake, you find that it is nothing but the flickering of your drowsy fire, and the feeble flutter of bats among the boughs of the trees. A night among the cedars is never forgotten; the impressions, electro-

age and size rendered them Biblical, or at least historical. It is not easy, however, to draw any such line of demarcation. There is a complete gradation from small and comparatively young to the very oldest patriarchs of the forest. I counted four hundred and forty-three, great and small, and this cannot be far from the



typed, are hid away in the inner chamber of the soul, among her choicest treasures, to be visited a thousand times with never-failing delight.

"There is a singular discrepancy in the statements of travellers with regard to the number of trees. Some mention seven, others thirteen—intending, doubtless, only those whose true number. This, however, is not uniform. Some are struck down by lightning, broken by enormous loads of snow, or torn to fragments by tempests. Even the sacrilegious axe is sometimes lifted against them. But, on the other hand, young trees are constantly springing up from the roots of old ones, and from seeds of ripe cones. I have seen these infant



THE CEDARS.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

cedars in thousands just springing from the soil; but as the grove is wholly unprotected, and greatly frequented both by men and animals, they are quickly destroyed. The fact, however, proves that the number might be increased *ad libitum*. Beyond a doubt, the whole of these upper terraces of Lebanon might again be covered with groves of this noble tree, and furnish timber enough not only for Solomon's Temple and the house of the forest of Lebanon, but for all the houses along this coast. But, unless a wiser and more provident government controls the country, such a result can never be realized, and, indeed, the whole forest will slowly die out under the dominion of the Arab and Turk. Even in that case the tree will not be lost. It has been propagated by the nut or seed in many parks in Europe, and there are more of them within fifty miles of London than on all Lebanon.

"We have seen larger trees every way, and much taller, on the banks of the Ohio, and the loftiest cedar might take shelter under the lowest branches of California's vegetable glories. Still, they are respectable trees. The girth of the largest is more than forty-one feet; the height of the highest may be one hundred. These largest, however, part into two or three only a few feet from the ground. Their age is very uncertain, nor are they more ready to reveal it than others who have an uneasy consciousness of length of days. Very different estimates have been made. Some of our missionary band, who have experience in such matters, and confidence in the results, have counted the *growths* (as we Western people call the annual concentric circles) for a few inches into the trunk of the oldest cedar, and from such data carry back its birth three thousand five hundred years. It may be so. They are carved full of names and dates, going back several generations, and the growth *since* the *earliest date* has been almost nothing. At this rate of increase they must have been growing ever since the Flood. But young trees enlarge far faster, so that my confidence in estimates made from such specimens is but small." The idea in the passage before us is, that the righteous will flourish like the most luxuriant and majestic trees of the forest; they may be compared with the most grand and beautiful objects in nature.

13. *Those that be planted in the house of the* LORD. As if plants were reared up in the house of God. The same image, under the idea of the olive tree, occurs in Ps. lii. 8. See Notes on that verse. The passage here may refer particularly to those who have been trained up in connexion with the church; young plants set out in the sanctuary, and cultivated until they have reached their growth. ¶ *Shall flourish in the courts of our God.* That is, Having been planted there, they will grow there; they will send out their boughs there; they will produce fruit there. The "courts" of the house of God were properly the areas or open spaces around the tabernacle or the temple (see Notes on Matt. xxi. 12); but the word came also to denote the tabernacle or the temple itself, or to designate a place where God was worshipped. It has this meaning here. The passage affords an encouragement to parents to train up their children in attendance on the ordinances of public worship; and it shows the advantage of having been born in the church, and of having been trained up in it,—an advantage which no one can fully appreciate. The passage may also be regarded as furnishing a proof of what will be the result of being thus "planted" and nurtured in connexion with the church,—inasmuch as trees carefully planted and cultivated are expected to produce more and better fruit than those which grow wild.

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and [1] flourishing;

15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, [e] and *there is* no unrighteousness [f] in him.

[1] *green.* [e] Deut. xxxii. 4. [f] Zeph. iii. 5.

14. *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.* As a tree that is carefully planted and cultivated may be expected to live long, and to bear fruit even when it is old. It is true that such a tree may be cut down; or that it may be blown down by winds and tempests; or that it *may* be unproductive, but as a general rule, and as laying the foundation of a reasonable hope, such a tree may be expected to live long, and to produce fruit even when it is old. So of one devoted early to God, and trained up under the influences of religion. The care, the culture, the habits of temperance, of industry, of moderation, and of sobriety so formed, are favourable to length of days, and lay the foundation for usefulness when old age comes. An aged man should be useful. He should feel that whatever wisdom he may possess as the result of long study and experience, belongs to God and to truth; that one great reason for sparing him is that he may be useful; that the world needs the benefit of his counsel and his prayers; that his life is lengthened out not for his own ease or enjoyment, but that virtue and piety may be extended in the world by all the influence which he can bring to bear upon it in advanced years. It may be added that, as a matter of fact, those who are thus trained and are thus preserved, *are* useful in old age. No one thus spared need be useless; perhaps almost none are. There is something appropriate for old men to do, as there is for the young and the middle-aged; and it should be the object of an aged Christian to find out what that is, *and to do it.* The word rendered *old age* means literally *grey or hoary hair.* ¶ *They shall be fat.* The meaning is, that they shall be vigorous, or have the appearance of vigour and health. ¶ *And flourishing.* Marg., as in Heb., *green.* This image is taken from a tree, as if it were still green in old age, or gave no indications of decay.

15. *To shew that the* LORD *is upright.* That is, This will be a proof that God is faithful to his promises; that he is the true friend of his people. The fact that they live long,—that they are happy and useful even in old age, will be a demonstration that God is the friend of virtue, and that he deals with men according to their character. ¶ He is *my rock.* He is my defence; that which constitutes my security. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2. This is language of strong confidence in view of all that is said in the psalm. ¶ And there is *no unrighteousness in him.* This is said in the most absolute form,—implying the most entire confidence. God is altogether to be trusted. There is *no* evil or wrong in his character or in his dealings. In all respects he is worthy of confidence:—*worthy* to be loved, trusted, adored, obeyed, by the inhabitants of all worlds. What a sublime thought is this! What a consolatory truth! What would the universe be if God, a Being of infinite POWER, were not a Being of perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS, and could *not* be trusted by the creatures which he has made!

PSALM XCIII.

The author of this psalm is unknown, and there is nothing by which we can determine this, or its date, or the occasion on which it was written. It seems, from ver. 5, to have been composed with some reference to the sanctuary, and to the service there:—"Holiness becometh thine *house*, O Lord," and it may have been designed, with the last psalm, to have been used in the place of public worship on the sabbath-day. It would appear, also, from the structure of the psalm, that it was composed in view of some danger which may have threatened the nation from some

PSALM XCIII.

THE *g* LORD reigneth; he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.

2 Thy throne *h is* established [1] of old: thou *art* from everlasting.

g Isa. lii. 7; Rev. xix. 6. *h* Ps. xlv. 6.

[1] *from then.*

hostile power (vers. 1–4), and that the design was to impart confidence in God, or to keep up the assurance in the mind of the people that God presided over all, and that his kingdom was safe. With this view, it is adapted to inspire confidence in God in all ages, and in all times of danger. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the title is, "The praise of an ode by David, for the day preceding the sabbath, when the earth was founded." The origin of this title is unknown, and it has no authority. There is no evidence that it was composed by David, and the presumption from ver. 5 is that it was composed after the temple was built, and consequently after the death of David.

1. *The* LORD *reigneth.* The same commencement of a psalm occurs in Ps. xcvii. and xcix. The same idea is often found in the Scriptures. 1 Chron. xvi. 31; Ps. xlvii. 8; Isa. lii. 7; Rev. xix. 6. The thought seems abrupt here. It would appear as if the psalmist had been meditating on the dark things which occur in the world; the mysteries which abound; the things which seem irreconcilable with the idea that there is a just government over the world, and that suddenly the idea occurs, as a flash of lightning in a storm, that Jehovah reigns over all, and that all must be right. Amidst all these things God sits upon the throne; he orders all events; he sways his sceptre over all; he orders all things according to his own will; he secures the accomplishment of his own purposes. ¶ *He is clothed with majesty.* That is, he puts on, or wears this; he appears in this as a garb, or robe. The word rendered "majesty" means properly *loftiness,* and is applied to the swelling of the sea (Ps. lxxxix. 9), or to a column of smoke, Isa. ix. 18. The idea here is, that God is exalted; and that he appears in such a manner as to indicate his proper dignity. See Notes on Isa. vi. 1. ¶ *The* LORD *is clothed with strength,* wherewith *he hath girded himself.* There is an allusion here to the mode of dress among the Orientals—the custom of girding the loins when one laboured, or walked, or ran. See Notes on Matt. v. 38–41. ¶ *The world also is stablished.* Is firm; is on a solid foundation. It cannot be shaken or destroyed by natural convulsions, or by the power of man. ¶ *That it cannot be moved.* Moved out of its place; overthrown; destroyed. This seems to have been spoken in view of some impending calamity, as if everything were to be swept away. The psalmist consoles himself with the thought that the world was firmly established; that no storm or tempest could be so violent as to remove it out of its place. The ground of consolation is the essential stability of what God has ordained.

2. *Thy throne* is *established of old.* Whatever might occur, the throne of God was firm. That could not be moved. It had been set up from all eternity. It had stood through all the convulsions and changes which had occurred in the universe; and it would stand firm for ever. Whatever might change, that was immovable; and as long as that *is* unchanged we have a ground of security and hope. Should *that* be moved, all would be gone. The margin here is, as in Heb., *from then*:—but it means *of old;* from the most ancient times; that is, from the period indicated by the next clause, "from everlasting." ¶ *Thou* art *from everlasting.* From all eternity; thou hast always existed; thou art ever the same (Ps. xc. 1).

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

4 The [i] LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.

5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness [k] becometh thine house, O LORD, [l] for ever.

[i] Ps. lxxxix. 9.

[k] Heb. xii. 14; Rev. xxi. 27.

[l] *to length of days*, Ps. xxiii. 6.

3. *The floods have lifted up, O* LORD, *the floods have lifted up their voice.* The word here rendered *floods*, means properly *rivers*, and then it may be applied to any waters. The word *voice* here refers to the noise of raging waters when they are agitated by the winds, or when they dash on the shore. See Notes on Ps. xlii. 7. ¶ *The floods lift up their waves.* As if they would sweep everything away. The allusion here is to some calamity or danger which might, in its strength and violence, be compared with the wild and raging waves of the ocean. Or if it refers literally to the ocean in a storm, then the psalm may have been the reflections of the author as he stood on the shore of the sea, and saw the waves beat and dash against the shore. To one thus looking upon the billows as they roll in towards the shore, it seems as if they were angry; as if they intended to sweep everything away; as if the rocks of the shore could not resist them. Yet they have their bounds. They spend their strength; they break, and retire as if to recover their force, and then they renew their attack with the same result. But their power is limited. The rocky shore is unmoved. The earth abides. God is over all. His throne is unshaken. No violence of the elements can affect that; and, under his dominion, all is secure.

4. *The* LORD *on high* is *mightier than the noise of many waters.* That is, he is more powerful than those waters; he is able to control them. See Notes on Ps. lxv. 7; Job xxxviii. 11. The original here is more rapid in the course of the thought; more emphatic and forcible:—"More than the voice of waters—many—mighty—the breakers of the sea—in the high place is Jehovah." He is over all those billows and breakers; more mighty than they all. They can proceed no farther than he permits; they will be stayed when and where he commands. We can conceive of few things which more illustrate the power and the majesty of God than the fact that he thus presides over, and controls, the waves of the ocean. ¶ Yea, than *the mighty waves of the sea.* The original word here corresponds precisely with our word *breakers*—the mighty waves that *break* on the beach.

5. *Thy testimonies are very sure.* All that thou hast borne *witness* to; all that thou hast affirmed or declared to be true. This would embrace *all* that God has spoken, whether his law, his promises, his commands, his prophecies, or his statements of what has occurred and of what will occur. See Notes on Ps. xix. 7. ¶ *Holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD. The psalm seems to have been intended to be used in the sanctuary, as a part of public worship, and the word *holiness* here would seem to mean a proper respect for God; confidence in him; a state of mind free from all doubt, and from all that is impure. Perhaps there may be here, also, the idea that in all the convulsions of the world; in all that threatens to overthrow truth and righteousness; in all the attacks which are made on the Divine government; in all the efforts of the defenders of error, and in the midst of abounding iniquity, the church *should* maintain a firm adherence to the principles of *holiness*, to that which is right and true. There should be one place—the

church—where there would be no wavering in regard to truth and holiness;—one place, where the truth would be defended whatever commotions might be abroad. The main idea, therefore, in the psalm is, that, in view of the fact that God reigns, and that nothing can frustrate his plans, or disturb his throne, we should approach him with reverence, with humble trust, with sincere and pure hearts. In a larger sense, also,—in *the* largest sense conceivable,—it is true that *holiness*, purity, freedom from evil thoughts, from a wanton eye and a wanton imagination, from unholy plans and purposes, should prevail in the house of God, and should be regarded as indispensable to proper worship. As heaven is pure, and as there shall enter there nothing "that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" (Rev. xxi. 27), so in the place where we seek to prepare for that holy world—the sanctuary of God,—nothing should be allowed to enter that is impure and polluting; nothing that tends to corrupt or defile the soul. It may be added, that attendance in a place of public worship is calculated to *make* the heart pure, and to banish unholy thoughts and purposes from the soul. A man who *feels* that he is in the presence of a holy God, will not be likely to welcome into his soul polluted images and unholy desires. ¶ *For ever.* Marg., as in Heb., *to length of days.* The idea is, that it is *always* appropriate. See Notes on Ps. xxiii. 6.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm, in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, is entitled "A Psalm of David, for the fourth day of the week." What is the origin of this title is unknown, as there is nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew. In the original the psalm is without a title, nor is there anything in the contents of it which will enable us to determine who was the author, or to fix the date or the occasion of its composition. There is in it nothing necessarily inconsistent with the supposition that David was the author; and there were undoubtedly occasions in his life, when it would have been appropriate. There have been many conjectures as to the author, and as to the occasion on which it was composed. Rüdinger refers it to the times of David and the rebellion of Absalom; Venema supposes that it refers to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the persecution under him; De Wette refers it to the time of the Babylonish exile; others suppose that it was written on the eve of the Babylonish captivity. Whatever may have been the occasion, the style and form of the psalm are so general that it may be made a vehicle of pious thought, and of the feelings of the people of God, in all ages.

From the psalm itself it is plain that it was composed during some impending or actual national calamity. This is evident from vers. 3, 4, 5, 14, 20. It would seem, also, from vers. 7-10, that it was probably some calamity which was brought upon the people by a foreign nation,—a nation that defied Jehovah, and proclaimed that he was unable to defend his friends, or that he would not interpose in their behalf: "They say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." The object of the psalm is to show that God *is* the protector of his people; that he *does* regard them; that he *will* interpose in their behalf.

The psalm embraces the following subjects:—

(1) An appeal or prayer to God as the God of vengeance, or as a just God, vers. 1, 2.

(2) A statement of the character and purposes of the wicked who were bringing these calamities upon the nation, vers. 3-7.

(3) A direct appeal to these invaders themselves,—an appeal based on the ground that God could *not* be indifferent to the conduct of men; that he must hear their words, understand their thoughts, see their acts, and know all that they did, vers. 8-11.

(4) Consolation in the trouble derived from the fact that this was a deserved chastening of the Lord, and was not designed for their destruction, but for their good, vers. 12-15.

(5) The fact that God is a source of confidence, comfort, and support to his people, in all such times of trial, vers. 16-23.

PSALM XCIV.

O LORD God, [1] to whom [l] vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, [2] shew thyself.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

[1] *God of revenges.*
[l] Deut. xxxii. 35; Nahum i. 2.

3 LORD, how long [m] shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard [n] things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

[2] *shine forth,* Ps. lxxx. 1.
[m] Job xx. 5; Jer. xii. 1, 2.
[n] Ps. lxxiii. 8, etc.; Jude 15.

1. *O* LORD *God, to whom vengeance belongeth,* etc. Marg., *God of revenges.* The idea is, that it pertains to God to take vengeance, or to punish for crimes. See Notes on Rom. xii. 19. The appeal here is made to God in view of the crimes committed by others, and which are referred to in the subsequent part of the psalm. God is addressed as having the right to restrain and punish wicked men, and he is asked to interpose and assert that right in a case which clearly demanded it. The appeal is repeated to make it emphatic, or to denote *earnestness* in the petition. ¶ *Show thyself.* Marg., as in Heb., *shine forth.* The meaning is, Manifest thyself; come forth *as* such a God; prove thy right; display thy power, and show that thou *art* a God opposed to crime and wrong. The same Hebrew word is used here which is found in Ps. lxxx. 1, and which is there rendered *shine forth.* See Notes on that passage.

2. *Lift up thyself.* Be exalted or lifted up so as to be manifest in thy true character. The idea is that God was, as it were, sitting at his ease, or as if he were indifferent to what was occurring in the world. See Notes on Ps. iii. 7. ¶ *Thou Judge of the earth.* Ruler of the world; to whom it appertains to exercise judgment over all classes of people, and in all circumstances. The meaning here is, that as he was the Ruler of the whole earth, this matter came without doubt under his jurisdiction. It was a case for his interposition. ¶ *Render a reward to the proud.* A just recompence to the men who are confident in their own strength, and who are manifesting their pride in depriving others of their rights.

3. LORD, *how long shall the wicked,* etc. As if there were to be no end to their exaltation; their joy; their success. How long would God allow this? How long would he sit by and see it done? Was he disposed to let them go on for ever? Would he never interpose, and arrest them in their career? How often do we wonder that God does not interpose! How often does it seem inexplicable that a Being of almighty power and infinite goodness does not interfere with respect to the wickedness, the oppression, the slavery, the wrong, the cruelty, the fraud, the violence of the world—and put an end to it! Nay, how entirely are we overwhelmed at the thought that he does not put an end to iniquity in the universe altogether; that he never *will* thus interpose, and put an end to sin and sorrow! Such things are too high for us now; perhaps will be always so. Things on earth are not as we should suppose they would be; and we can only pause and adore where we cannot comprehend!

4. How long *shall they utter* and *speak hard things?* The word rendered *utter* means to pour forth—as water from a fountain; to pour forth copiously. The meaning is, that they seemed to be full, and that they poured forth evil words as a fountain pours forth water. The phrase *hard things* means proud, unfeeling, insolent things; things which are unjust, unkind, severe, harsh. ¶ And *all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

8 Understand, [o] ye brutish among the people; and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?

9 He [p] that planted the ear,

o Ps. xcii. 6; Rom. iii. 11. *p* Ex. iv. 11.

Boast of their power and their success. How long shall they be permitted to *have* such success as may seem to justify them in their exultation?

5. *They break in pieces thy people.* They tread down; they grind; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot; to trample on; and hence it means to oppress. Lam. iii. 34; Isa. iii. 15. ¶ *And afflict.* To wit, by oppression and wrong. If this refers to foreigners, it means that they did this by invasion and by the ravages of war. ¶ *Thine heritage.* Thy people, regarded as an inheritance or possession. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 9; xxxiii. 12; lxviii. 9; lxxiv. 2; Isa. xix. 25; xlvii. 6; 1 Pet. v. 3.

6. *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.* To do this is everywhere represented as a peculiar crime, and as peculiarly offensive to God from the fact that these classes are naturally feeble and unprotected. See Notes on Isa. i. 17; Ps. lxviii. 5; lxxxii. 3.

7. *Yet they say.* By their conduct; or, they seem to say. ¶ *The* LORD *shall not see.* In the original, יָהּ, *Jah.* This is an abbreviation of the word JEHOVAH. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 4; lxxxiii. 18. On the impious sentiment here expressed, see Notes on Ps. x. 11. ¶ *Neither shall the God of Jacob regard* it. Implying that God was indifferent to the conduct of men; that he would not punish the wicked; that sinners have nothing to fear at his hand. This sentiment is very common still, either as an article in their creed, or as implied in their conduct. The doctrine of universal salvation is really founded on this opinion; and most men *act* as if it were their belief that the wicked are in no danger of being punished, and that there is no such attribute in God as justice.

8. *Understand, ye brutish among the people.* See Ps. lxxiii. 22. The meaning here is, "You who are like the brutes; you who see and understand no more of the character and plans of God than the wild beasts of the desert." The meaning is, that they did not employ their reason in the case; they acted like beasts, regardless of the consequences of their conduct—*as if* God would treat men as he does the beasts; as if there were no retribution in the future world. ¶ *And* ye *fools, when will ye be wise?* How long is this stupidity to continue? When will you attend to the truth; when will you act as immortal beings; when will you suffer your rational nature to lead you up to just views of God? It is implied that this folly had been manifested for a long period, and that it was time they should arouse from this condition, and act like men. With what propriety may this language be addressed still to the great mass of mankind! What numbers of the human race are there now, who in respect to God, and to the purpose for which they were made, evince no more wisdom than the brutes that perish! Oh, if men were truly wise, what a beautiful world would this be;—how noble and elevated would be our now degraded race!

9. *He that planted the ear.* He that made the ear. The word here used in the original is a participle. "Shall not he *planting* the ear;" that is, the *planter* of the ear. The idea seems to have been taken from the act of making a *hole* in the

shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10 He that chastiseth the heathen, [q] shall not he correct? he

[r] that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*

11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* [s] vanity.

q Ez. xxxix. 21; Hab. iii. 12.
r Prov. ii. 6.
s 1 Cor. iii. 19, 20.

ground when we set out a plant,—as if, in like manner, a *hole* had been made in the side of the head to insert the ear. ¶ *Shall he not hear?* He could not have created the faculty of hearing, without possessing it himself. Or, it is reasonable to suppose that he who has made *man* capable of hearing, must be able to hear himself. We have nothing in our nature which is not possessed in an infinitely higher measure by God. ¶ *He that formed the eye.* This, too, is a participle: "He forming the eye;" that is, the Former of the eye. The word here used is frequently employed in reference to a *potter;* and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God. See this beautifully illustrated in Paley's Natural Theology. ¶ *Shall he not see?* He that made the eye to see must himself be able to see. He must see all that the eye itself can see; he must see all that *all* eyes see; he must have the power of sight far beyond what there is in the mere *organ* which he has made.

10. *He that chastiseth the heathen.* More literally, "Shall not the Reprover of nations—shall he not chastise—he that teaches man knowledge?" The idea is, that God exercises a government over the nations of the earth; that he has them under his control; that he brings heavy judgments on them; that he thus conveys great lessons to man. And shall not such a Being, in individual cases, reprove and correct for sin? It is assumed here that God, in fact, brings judgments on nations; that he does this by fire, flood, famine, pestilence; that these things are proofs that he presides over the nations of the earth; and the question here is, whether he that does this on the large scale must not be expected to do it in individual cases, so that the offender will not escape. ¶ *Shall not he correct?* Shall he not chastise, or bring judgments on offenders? ¶ *He that teacheth man knowledge,* etc. The idea in our translation, that he who imparts knowledge to mankind must himself possess intelligence, is a true one, but it is probably not that which is in the original. The sense is probably merely that God is the great Teacher, and this is the impression which it is intended should be impressed on the mind, leaving the consequences of this to be supplied by the reader: "He that teaches man all the knowledge that he has!"—reflect on the consequences of this, or what must follow from this! Such a Being cannot be ignorant; he must understand all things; he must, therefore, see human conduct everywhere as it is. The consequence—the result—of this is stated in the next verse, that he must see the *thoughts* of man, and understand his real character.

11. *The* LORD *knoweth the thoughts of man.* That is, He who teaches men all that they know (ver. 10), must understand all that there is in the mind. See Notes on 1 Cor. iii. 20. ¶ *That they* are *vanity.* That is, that they are foolish, vain, unwise, wicked. The knowledge of the thoughts themselves carries with it also the knowledge that they *are* vain and foolish,—for that is their character, and to know them truly is to know this of them. They do not appear to him as they do to men themselves. They are to his view

12 Blessed [t] *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

[t] Job v. 17; Prov. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 5, etc.

14 For [u] the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance:

15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall [1] follow it.

[u] 1 Sam. xii. 22; Rom. xi. 1, 2.
[1] be *after*.

stripped of all that is flattering and illusive, and are seen to be vain and foolish.

12. *Blessed* is *the man whom thou chastenest, O* LORD. "Happy the man;" or "Oh the blessedness of the man." See Notes on Ps. i. 1. The word here rendered *chastenest* does not mean to chasten in the sense of afflicting or punishing. It means here to instruct; to warn; to admonish; to exhort. So the word is employed in Prov. ix. 7; Job iv. 3; Ps. xvi. 7. The meaning here is, that the man is blessed or happy whom God so *instructs, warns,* or *teaches,* that he understands the principles of the Divine administration. Such a man will see reasons for confidence in him in trouble, and for calmness of mind until punishment is brought upon his enemies. ¶ *And teachest him out of thy law.* Causest him, from thy word, to understand the great principles of thy government.

13. *That thou mayest give him rest.* Mayest make his mind quiet and calm; mayest save him from murmuring, from despondency, from impatience, by just confidence in thee, and in thy government. ¶ *From the days of adversity.* Or, in the days of evil; the time of calamity and trouble. That his mind may then be composed and calm. ¶ *Until the pit be digged for the wicked.* Until the wicked be punished; that is, while the preparations are going on, or while God seems to delay punishment, and the wicked are suffered to live as if God did not notice them, or would not punish them. The idea is, that the mind should not be impatient as if their punishment would not come, or as if God were unconcerned; and that just views of the Divine administration would tend to make the mind calm even when the wicked *seemed* to prosper and triumph. See Notes on Ps. lxxiii. 16–22. The phrase "until the pit be digged" is derived from the method of hunting wild beasts by digging a pit into which they might fall and be taken. See Notes on Ps. vii. 15.

14. *For the* LORD *will not cast off his people,* etc. He will interpose in their behalf though the wicked seem now to triumph. The certainty of this would give consolation; this would make the mind calm in the days of trouble. Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 22; 1 Kings vi. 13; Deut. xxxi. 6. See Notes on Rom. xi. 1, 2.

15. *But judgment shall return unto righteousness.* That is, The exercise of judgment shall be so manifest to the world,—as if it *returned* to it,—as to show that there is a righteous God. The truth here taught is, that the *results* of God's interposition in human affairs will be such as to show that he is on the side of righteousness, or such as to vindicate and maintain the cause of righteousness in the earth. ¶ *And all the upright in heart shall follow it.* Marg., *shall be after it.* The meaning is, that all who are upright in heart—all who are truly righteous—will follow on in the path of justice; that they will regard what God does as right, and will walk in that path. The fact that what occurs is done by God, will be to them a sufficient revelation of what *ought* to be done; and they will follow out the teachings properly suggested by the Divine dealings as their rules of life. In other words,

16 Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? *or* who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

17 Unless [v] the LORD *had been*

[v] Ps. cxxiv. 1, 2. [1] Or, *quickly.*

my help, my soul had [1] almost dwelt in silence.

18 When I said, My foot [w] slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19 In the multitude of my

[w] Ps. xxxviii. 16.

the manifested laws of the Divine administration will be to them an indication of what is right; and they will embrace and follow the lessons thus made known to them by the dealings of Divine Providence as the rules of their own conduct.

16. *Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* etc. This is the language of the psalmist. It is what he *had* said in the circumstances referred to in the first part of the psalm, when the wicked seemed to triumph; when they had come in upon the land, and laid waste the heritage of God, vers. 3–6. At that time, full of anxiety and trouble, and deeply impressed with a sense of danger, he had anxiously looked around for help, and had asked with deep concern who would stand up for him and defend him. The following verses (17, 18) show what was then his reliance, and in what way confidence in God had kept him from falling into despair.

17. *Unless the* LORD had been *my help.* At the time referred to. If I had not had a God to whom I could have gone,—if my mind had not been directed to him,—if I had not actually found him a refuge and strength, I should have despaired altogether. There was no other one to whom I could go; there was nothing else but the help of God on which I could rely. ¶ *My soul had almost dwelt in silence.* Marg., *quickly.* The original is, "It was as it were but little;" that is, there was little wanting to bring this about; a little heavier pressure —a little added to what I was then suffering—a little longer time before relief was obtained — would have brought me down to the land of silence—to the grave. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "My soul had dwelt *in inferno.*" The Septuagint, "in Hades"—τῷ ᾅδῃ. See Psalm xxxi. 17. The grave is represented as a place of silence, or as the land of silence: Ps. cxv. 17: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Comp. Amos viii. 3.

18. *When I said, My foot slippeth.* I can no longer stand. My strength is gone; and I must sink into the grave. The original here is, "*If I say,* My foot slippeth," etc. The statement is general; that if at any time he had been, or should be, in such circumstances, then God would interpose. The general remark, however, is founded on his interposition on this particular occasion. His aid was then so marked and timely, that he felt that he could make the declaration general in regard to his whole life—to all circumstances in which he would ever be placed. ¶ *Thy mercy, O* LORD, *held me up.* By thy merciful interposition thou didst keep me from falling. It was strength put forth as the expression of *mercy;*—not strength to which he had any claim. How often in life may we say this of ourselves, that when just ready to sink; when our strength was almost gone; when a little severer pressure would have brought us to the grave, God by his mercy and his power interposed and saved us! Every such act of mercy—every new interposition in this manner—is a new gift of life, and lays us under obligation as if we had been just created,—for it is just so much more of life given us by God.

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.* The Septuagint and the Latin

thoughts within me thy comforts [x] delight my soul.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity

x Ps. lxiii. 5, 6; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

have fellowship with thee, which [y] frameth mischief by a law?

21 They [z] gather themselves

y Isa. x. 1. z Prov. i. 11, 16; Matt. xxvii. 1.

Vulgate render this, "In the multitude of my *griefs* within me," etc. De Wette renders it, "Bei meinen vielen Sorgen,"—*in my many cares.* The Hebrew word, however, properly means *thoughts;* and the idea seems to be that in the great number of thoughts which passed through his mind, so many of them perplexing, anxious, burdensome,—so many of them vain and profitless,—so many of them that seemed to come and go without any aim or object, there was *one* class that gave him comfort. They were those which pertained to God. In those thoughts he found calmness and peace. However much he might be disturbed by other thoughts, yet here he found rest and peace. In God,—in his character, in his law, in his government,—he had an unfailing source of consolation; and whatever trouble he might have from the cares of life, and from the evil imaginings in his own mind, yet here his soul found repose. God was an unfailing refuge; and meditation on him and his perfections made the mind calm. How many thoughts pass through our minds in a single day or a single hour! Who can tell whence they come, or by what laws they are linked together! How many of them *seem* to have no connexion with any that went before! How many of them seem to be thrown into our minds when we would avoid them! How many are vain and frivolous; how many are sceptical; how many are polluted and polluting! How many come into the mind which we would not for worlds disclose to our best friends! How few of us would walk abroad if we were conscious that all whom we meet could look into our bosoms, and see all that is passing there! What a consolation it is to us that they cannot see it! What a world of confusion and blushes would this be if, in the streets of a crowded city, or when man meets his fellow man anywhere, all that is in his bosom were known! And yet, in this multitude of thoughts—so empty, so foolish, so sinful, so vexing, so sceptical, so polluting—there are others—there *are* thoughts of God, of Christ, of heaven, of hope, of faith, of love, of benevolence; thoughts within us, when the Divine promises come to the heart, and the prospect of heaven warms the soul. These give "comfort;" these fill the soul with "delight." Happy he who can find in his bosom, amidst the multitude of thoughts within him, those which pertain to God; to a higher life; to heaven!

20. *Shall the throne of iniquity.* The throne established in iniquity; or, sustaining iniquity. The allusion is probably to what was referred to in the former part of the psalm,—the powers that were spreading desolation through the land,—wicked princes or rulers, vers. 3–7. Their thrones were established on evil; they defended wickedness and wrong by their authority; they abused their power, and employed it to overthrow the rights of others. The *phrase* would be applicable to any unjust government, or to any laws that are designed to uphold that which is wrong. Such are all the laws which authorize or uphold slavery, gaming, lotteries, the traffic in intoxicating drinks, etc. ¶ *Have fellowship with thee.* With God. Shall they be united with thee; be sustained by thee; be regarded as a part of thine administration? Wilt thou sanction them? Wilt thou give to them thy patronage, as if they met with thine approbation? The Hebrew word means to be associated with, or allied to, and would be properly applied to a partnership, or anything where there is

together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own [a] wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

a Prov. v. 22.

fellowship or alliance. The interrogative form here strongly implies that this *cannot be.* Such laws—such purposes—*cannot* be in accordance with the laws and authority of God; or, in other words, God does not sit on the same throne with those who authorize and by law sustain slavery, intemperance, and gambling. There can be no partnership here. ¶ *Which frameth mischief by a law.* The word rendered *mischief* usually means labour, toil; and then, trouble, vexation, sorrow. It may, however, be used to denote evil of any kind—crime, or wrong. The word rendered *frameth* means to form, to fashion, to make, as a potter does clay; Gen. ii. 7, 8, 19; or as a workman does statues, Isa. xliv. 9, 10, 12; or as one makes weapons, Isa. liv. 17. It is often applied to God as the Creator. See Notes on ver. 9: "he that *formed* the eye." The word *law* here means a rule or statute; and the idea is, that the iniquity referred to was not the result of an irregular and fitful impulse; or of passion; of sudden excitement; or of mere *will* in a particular case; but was reduced to *statute*, and sustained by law. The expression would apply to all those cases where evil is upheld by the government or by civil authority, or where those who are engaged in it can plead in their defence the sanction of law. The statement here is, that such acts *cannot* have fellowship with God, or receive his approval. It is an insult to God to suppose that he has ever appointed legislators or magistrates for the purpose of making or upholding such enactments. Yet there are many such laws in the world; and a main reason why it is so difficult to remove such evils as have been above referred to is the fact that they *are* sustained by law, and that they who hold slaves, or open gambling-houses, or sell intoxicating drinks, can plead the authority of the law; or, in other words, that the laws have done all they can to place such things on a level with those which *ought* to be protected by statute. Many a man in his business looks no farther than to the laws of the land, and if he has *their* sanction, in vain is the attempt to induce him to abandon a business that leads to oppression, or that scatters woe and sorrow through a community.

21. *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous.* Against the *life* of the righteous; that is, to take their lives. The Hebrew word rendered *gather together*, means to press or crowd upon any one; to rush in crowds or troops. It would refer particularly to a tumultuous gathering—*a mob*—intent on accomplishing its purpose. ¶ *And condemn the innocent blood.* Literally, *make guilty;* that is, they hold that blood to be guilty; or, they treat the innocent as if they were guilty.

22. *But the* LORD *is my defence,* etc. In all these purposes of the wicked; in all that they do,—whether under the form and sanction of law (ver. 20), or by the excitement of passion,—my trust is still in God. He is able to interpose in either case, and I may confidently commit my cause to him. On the language used here, as well as the sentiment, see Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

23. *And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity.* The consequences of their sin. He shall punish them as they deserve. See Notes on Ps. vii. 16. ¶ *And shall cut them off in their own wickedness.* As the result

PSALM XCV.

O COME, let us sing unto the LORD; let [b] us make a joyful noise to the rock [c] of our salvation.

2 Let us [1] come before his presence with thanksgiving, and

[b] Ps. c. 1. [c] 2 Sam. xxii. 47.

[1] *prevent his face.*

of their wickedness, and while they are engaged in perpetrating acts of sin. ¶ Yea, *the* LORD *our God shall cut them off.* Expressing, by the repetition of the sentiment, the utmost confidence that this would be so. This is in accordance with the prayer with which the psalm opens, and is expressive of entire faith that God will deal justly with the children of men. However the wicked may seem to prosper and to triumph, yet the day of vengeance is approaching, and all which they have deserved will come upon them.

PSALM XCV.

Of the author of this psalm nothing is certainly known. It is, however, ascribed to David in the Latin Vulgate and in the Septuagint; and in Heb. iv. 7, it is referred to as a psalm of David: "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying *in David*, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice,'" etc. This language may refer in general to the Book of Psalms, called from their chief author, the Psalms of David; or it may mean that David was the author of this particular psalm. Either supposition would meet all that is demanded by the quotation in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is, however, no improbability in the supposition that the psalm was written by David, as he doubtless composed many songs to which his name was not attached.

Nothing is known of the *occasion* on which the psalm was composed. It is a general song of praise, and contains only such language as might be proper in any period of the Jewish history after the people were established in the promised land. It is, indeed, a *Hebrew* song; it has reference to the Hebrew people; and it contains such arguments and appeals as would be particularly adapted to influence them.

The psalm consists of three parts:—

I. An exhortation to praise and worship God, vers. 1, 2.

II. Reasons for offering such praise, vers. 3–7:—(*a*) He is a great God, ver. 3; (*b*) He has made all things, and all things are under his control, vers. 4, 5; (*c*) He is our Maker, ver. 6; (*d*) He is our God, and we are his people, ver. 7.

III. An exhortation not to harden the heart; not to be perverse and rebellious, vers. 7–11. This is enforced by the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the results which followed from their tempting God, and provoking his wrath. The appeal is founded on the fact that, in consequence of their rebellion, they were shut out of the promised land. On the same principle, if we are rebellious, we shall be excluded from heaven.

1. *O come, let us sing unto the* LORD. The word here rendered *come*, means properly *go;* but it is here used, as it often is, as a formula of invitation, in calling on others to share in what is done by the speaker. It is here to be understood as used by one portion of an assembly convened for worship addressing the other portion, and calling on them to unite in the praise of God. ¶ *Let us make a joyful noise.* The word here used means commonly to make a loud noise, to shout, Job xxx. 5. It is especially used (*a*) of warlike shouts, Josh. vi. 16; 1 Sam. xvii. 20; (*b*) of the shout of triumph, Judges xv. 14; (*c*) of the sound or clangour of a trumpet, Num. x. 9; Joel ii. 1. It may thus be used to denote any shout of joy or praise. In public worship it would denote praise of the most animated kind. ¶ *To the Rock of our salvation.* The strong ground of our confidence; the basis of our hope; our security. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2.

2. *Let us come before his presence.* Marg., as in Heb., *prevent his face.* The word in Hebrew means literally to come before; to anticipate. It is the word which is commonly rendered

make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For [d] the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King [e] above all gods.

4 In [1] his hand *are* the deep places of the earth; the [2] strength of the hills *is* his also.

5 [3] The sea *is* his, and he made *f* it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.

[d] Ps. xcvii. 9. [e] Mal. i. 14.

[1] *whose*. [2] Or, *heights of the hills* are *his*. [3] *Whose the sea* is. *f* Gen. i. 9, 10.

prevent. See Notes on Job iii. 12; Ps. xvii. 13; lix. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 15. Here it means to come before, in the sense of *in front of*. Let us stand before his face; that is, in his very presence. ¶ *With thanksgiving*. Expressing our thanks. ¶ *And make a joyful noise unto him*. The same word which occurs in ver. 1. ¶ *With psalms*. Songs of praise.

3. *For the* LORD is *a great God*. For *Jehovah* is a great God. The object is to exalt *Jehovah*, the true God, as distinguished from all who were worshipped as gods. The first idea is that he is "*great*;" that he is exalted over all the universe; that he rules over all, and that he is to be worshipped as such. ¶ *And a great King above all gods*. This does not mean that he is a great ruler of all other gods, as if they had a real existence, but that he is king or ruler far above all that were worshipped as gods, or to whom homage was paid. Whoever, or whatever was worshipped as God, Jehovah was supreme over all things. He occupied the throne; and all others must be beneath him, and under his dominion. If the sun, the moon, or the stars were worshipped,—if the mountains or the rivers,—if angels good or bad, —yet Jehovah was above all these. If imaginary beings were worshipped, yet Jehovah in his perfections was exalted far above all that was ascribed to them; for He was the true God, and the Ruler of the universe, while they were beings of the imagination only.

4. *In his hand*. In his power, or under his control as his own. That is, he so possesses all things that they can be claimed by no other. His right over them is absolute and entire. ¶ Are *the deep places of the earth*. The word here used—מֶחְקְרֵי, *mehhkor*—means the interior, the inmost depth; that which is *searched out*, from חָקַר—*hhakar*—to search, search out, explore. The primary idea is that of searching by boring or digging; and the allusion here is to the parts of the earth which could be explored only by digging—as in mining, or sinking shafts in the earth. The meaning is, that all those places which lie beyond the ordinary power of observation in man are in the hand of God. He knows them as clearly as those which are most plain to human view; he possesses or owns them as his own as really as he does those which are on the surface of the ground. ¶ *The strength of the hills* is *his also*. Marg., *The heights of the hills are his*. The word rendered strength — תּוֹעֲפוֹת, *toâphoth* —means properly swiftness or speed in running; then, weariness, wearisome labour; and hence, wealth obtained by labour; *treasures*. Here the expression means *treasures of the mountains;* that is, treasures obtained out of the mountains, the precious metals, etc. Comp. Notes on Job xxii. 25, where the same word occurs. All this belongs to God. As he is the Maker of these hills, and of all that they contain, the absolute proprietorship is in him.

5. *The sea* is *his*. Marg., as in Heb., *Whose the sea is*. That is, The sea belongs to him, with all which it contains. ¶ *And he made it*. It is his, *because* he made it. The creation of anything gives the highest possible right over it. ¶ *And his hands formed the dry* land. He has a claim, therefore, that it should be recognised as his, and that all who

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel *g* before the LORD our maker.

7 For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day, *h* if ye will hear his voice,

g Acts xxi. 5; Phil. ii. 10. *h* Heb. iii. 7, 15.

dwell upon it, and derive their support from it, should acknowledge him as its great Owner and Lord.

6. *O come, let us worship and bow down.* Let us worship him by bowing down; by prostrating ourselves before him. The word here rendered "come" is not the same which is used in ver. 1. Its literal meaning is *come*, and it is an earnest exhortation *to* come and worship. It is not a particle merely calling *attention* to a subject, but it is an exhortation to approach—to enter—to engage in a thing. The word rendered *worship*, means properly to bow down; to incline oneself; and then, to bow or prostrate oneself before any one in order to do him homage, or reverence. Then it means to bow down before God in the attitude of worship. It would most naturally refer to an entire *prostration* on the ground, which was a common mode of worship; but it would also express adoration in any form. The word rendered *bow down*, means properly *to bend, to bow*, spoken usually of the knees. Isa. xlv. 23: "every knee shall bow." Comp. Judges vii. 5, 6; 1 Kings viii. 54; 2 Kings i. 13. The word *might* be applied, like the former word, to those who bow down with the whole person, or prostrate themselves on the ground. 2 Chron. vii. 3. ¶ *Let us kneel before the* LORD *our Maker.* The usual attitude of prayer in the Scriptures. See Notes on Dan. vi. 10; comp. 2 Chron. vi. 13; Luke xxii. 41; Acts vii. 60; ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5. All the expressions here employed denote a posture of profound reverence in worship, and the passage is a standing rebuke of all irreverent postures in prayer; of such habits as often prevail in public worship where no *change* of posture is made in prayer, and where a congregation irreverently *sit* in the act of professedly worshipping God. Men show to their fellowmen the respect indicated by rising up before them:—much more should they show respect to God—respect in a posture which will indicate profound reverence, and a deep sense of his presence and majesty. Reverently kneeling or standing *will* indicate this; sitting does *not* indicate it.

7. *For he* is *our God.* Not only the God whom we worship as the true God, but One who has revealed himself to us as *our* God. We worship him as God—as entitled to praise and adoration *because* he is the true God; we worship him also as sustaining the relation of God to us, or *because* we recognize him as our God, and *because* he has manifested himself as ours. ¶ *And we* are *the people of his pasture.* Whom he has recognized as his flock; to whom he sustains the relation of shepherd; who feeds and protects us as the shepherd does his flock. See Notes on Ps. lxxix. 13; comp. Ps. xxiii. 1–3. ¶ *And the sheep of his hand.* The flock that is guided and fed by his hand. ¶ *To day if ye will hear his voice.* His voice calling you; commanding you; inviting you; encouraging you. See this passage explained in the Notes on Heb. iii. 7–11. The word *to-day* here means *the present time;* now. The idea is, that the purpose to obey should not be deferred till to-morrow; should not be put off to the future. The commands of God should be obeyed at once; the purpose should be executed immediately. All God's commands relate to the present. He gives us none for the future; and a true purpose to obey God exists only where there is a willingness to obey *now,—to-day;*—and can exist only then. A purpose to repent at some future time, to give up the world at some future time, to embrace the Gospel at some future time, is *no* obedience,—for there is no

8 Harden not your heart, as in the [1] provocation, [i] *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted [k] me, proved me, and saw my work

[1] *contention.*

[i] Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Num. xiv. 2, etc.; Deut. vi. 16.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

11 Unto whom I sware [l] in my wrath, [2] that they should not enter into my rest.

[k] 1 Cor. x. 9. [l] Heb. iv. 3, 5. [2] *if they enter.*

such command addressed to us. A resolution to put off repentance and faith, to defer attention to religion till some future time, is real disobedience,—and often the worst form of disobedience,—for it is directly in the face of the command of God. "*If* ye will hear." That is, If there is a disposition or willingness to obey his voice at all; or, to listen to his commands. See Notes on Heb. iii. 7.

8. *Harden not your heart.* See this verse explained in the Notes on Heb. iii. 8. ¶ *As in the provocation,* etc. Marg., *contention.* The original is *Meribah.* See Ex. xvii. 7, where the original words *Meribah,* rendered here *provocation,* and *Massah,* rendered here *temptation,* are retained in the translation.

9. *When your fathers.* Your ancestors. See this verse explained in the Notes on Heb. iii. 9. ¶ *Tempted me.* Tried me; tried my patience, to see how much I would bear. This does not mean, as it commonly does now with us, to place inducements before one to lead him into sin, but to *try* one—to put his patience to the test. This they did, in the case referred to, by their obduracy and evil conduct. ¶ *Proved me.* See Notes on Heb. iii. 9. *And saw my work.* Though they constantly saw my work; saw my gracious interpositions; saw what I was doing for their own good.

10. *Forty years long.* All the time that they were in the wilderness. During this long period their conduct was such as to try my patience and forbearance. ¶ *Was I grieved.* The word here used—קוּט, *kūt*—means properly to loathe, to nauseate, to be disgusted with. It is translated *loathe* in Ezek. vi. 9; xx. 43; xxxvi. 31; and *grieved* in Ps. cxix. 158; cxxxix. 21. It is here expressive of the strong abhorrence which God had of their conduct. Comp. Rev. iii. 16. ¶ *With* this *generation.* With the entire generation that came out of Egypt. They were all cut off in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua. ¶ *And said, It* is *a people.* It is a characteristic of the entire people, that they are disposed to wander from God. ¶ *That do err in their heart.* In the Epistle to the Hebrews (iii. 10) where this is quoted, it is, "They do always err in their heart." The sense is substantially the same. See Notes on that place. ¶ *And they have not known my ways.* See Notes on Heb. iii. 10.

11. *Unto whom I sware in my wrath.* See Notes on Heb. iii. 11. ¶ *That they should not enter into my rest.* Marg., as in Heb., *If they enter into my rest.* The *rest* here referred to was the land of Canaan. They were not permitted to enter there as a place of *rest* after their long and weary wanderings, but died in the wilderness. The meaning is not that none of them were saved (for we must hope that very many of them were brought to the heavenly Canaan), but that they did not come to the promised land. Unbelief shut them out; and this fact is properly made use of here, and in Heb. iii., as furnishing a solemn warning to all not to be unbelieving and rebellious, since the consequence of unbelief and rebellion must be to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven, the true place of "rest."

PSALM XCVI.

O SING [m] unto the LORD a new

[m] 1 Chron. xvi. 23—33.

song; sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

2 Sing unto the LORD, bless

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm is similar in structure and design to Ps. xcv. It is an exhortation to universal praise, and was doubtless designed to be used in public worship,—in the service of the sanctuary.

The psalm has no title in the Hebrew, and its authorship cannot with any certainty be determined. There is, however, a very marked similarity between this psalm and a portion of that which was composed and sung at the removal of the ark by David, as recorded in 1 Chron. xvi., and of which it is said (1 Chron. xvi. 7), "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Of the original psalm, therefore, David was undoubtedly the author. The ninety-sixth psalm is merely an abridgment of that one, or more properly an *extract* from it, since it is essentially similar to one portion of it, and is taken from it with very slight variations, 1 Chron. xvi. 23–33. But by whom the *extract* and the slight alterations were made, and on what occasion this was done, we have no certain means of ascertaining. The title in the Septuagint is, "When the house was built after the captivity. An ode by David." The same is the title in the Latin Vulgate. According to this, it is supposed that on the dedication of the temple, when it was rebuilt after the Babylonish captivity, a portion of a psalm composed by David was selected and arranged for that purpose. Hence it might be properly called "A Psalm of David;" though not, of course, composed by him for that particular occasion. This seems to me to be a very probable account of the origin of the psalm, and of the reason why it has its present form. In the original psalm (1 Chron. xvi.) there were things which would not be particularly appropriate to the dedication of the temple, while the portion which is extracted is eminently fitted for such a service. De Wette doubts the genuineness of the psalm in 1 Chron. xvi.; and Hengstenberg supposes that that psalm was made up of parts taken from psalms which were then in common use. But it seems to me that the suggestion above is the most natural, and sufficiently explains the origin of this psalm. It would be very appropriate to the re-dedication of the temple; and it is appropriate to be used in similar services at all times.

The structure of the psalm is very simple, and it does not admit of any particular analysis.

1. *O sing unto the* LORD *a new song.* See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 3. This is the only addition made to the original form of the psalm. The word *new* here implies that there was some fresh occasion for celebrating the praises of God; that some event had occurred, or that some truth relating to the Divine character had now been made known, which could not well be expressed in any psalm or hymn then in use. It is a call on all to celebrate the praises of the Lord in a "new" song—new, particularly, as it calls on *all the earth* to join in it; and possibly this was designed to suggest the idea that while that temple stood, a dispensation would commence, under which the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles would be broken down, and all mankind would unite in the praise of God. ¶ *Sing unto the* LORD, *all the earth.* All nations. All people had occasion to bless his name; to praise him. What he had done, what he was still doing, was of interest to all lands, and made an appeal to all people to praise him. The psalm is constructed on this supposition, that the occasion for praise referred to was one in which all people were interested; or, in other words, that Jehovah was the true God over all the nations, and that all people should acknowledge him.

2. *Sing unto the* LORD, *bless his name.* This verse is substantially the same as 1 Chron. xvi. 23; "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation." ¶ *Show forth his salvation.* His interposition; the fact that he has saved or delivered us. This may have re-

his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

4 For the LORD *is* great, and [n] greatly to be praised: he *is* to be feared above all gods.

5 For [o] all the gods of the nations *are* idols: but [p] the LORD made the heavens.

n Ps. xviii. 3. *o* Jer. x. 11, 12. *p* Isa. xlii. 5.

ferred originally in particular to what he had done to save the people in time of danger, but the language is such also as to express salvation in a higher sense—salvation from sin and death. As such it may be employed to express what God has done for mankind—for all men, Jews and Gentiles—in providing a way of salvation, and making it possible that they should reach heaven. For this all men have occasion for praise. ¶ *From day to day.* Continually; always. It is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day—on each returning morning, and on every evening—for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and *that he may be happy for ever.* If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating, as with sunbeams, all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night, and close our eyes in slumber—making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world we may be for ever happy.

3. *Declare his glory among the heathen.* Among the nations; the people who are not Hebrews. The meaning is, Let it be proclaimed in all lands, among all people. Let it not be confined to those who are professedly his people, but let it be announced everywhere. This is copied literally from 1 Chron. xvi. 24. ¶ *His wonders among all people.* His "marvellous works;" those things which are fitted to produce astonishment in the mind. The reference is to those works and doings of God which lie so far beyond the power of any created being, and which by their vastness, their wisdom, and their benevolence, are fitted to produce a deep impression on the human mind.

4. *For the* LORD is *great.* Jehovah is great. See Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 13. This verse is taken literally from 1 Chron. xvi. 25. ¶ *And greatly to be praised.* Worthy of exalted praise and adoration. ¶ *He* is *to be feared above all gods.* He is to be reverenced and adored above all that are called gods. Higher honour is to be given him; more lofty praise is to be ascribed to him. He is Ruler over all the earth, and has a claim to universal praise. Even if it were admitted that they were real gods, yet it would still be true that they were local and inferior divinities; that they ruled only over the particular countries where they were worshipped and acknowledged as gods, and that they had no claim to *universal* adoration as Jehovah has.

5. *For all the gods of the nations* are *idols.* All the gods worshipped by the people of other lands are mere *idols.* None of them can claim to have a real existence *as* gods. The word here rendered *idols* is translated by the Septuagint δαιμόνια, *demons.* So the Latin Vulgate *dæmonia.* The Hebrew word —אֱלִילִים, *Elil*—means properly *of nothing, nought, empty, vain.* See Job xiii. 4. The meaning here is, that they were mere nothings; they had no real existence; they were the creations of the imagination; they could not in any sense be regarded as what it was pretended they were; they had no claim to reverence and worship *as* gods. Of most of them it was a fact that they had *no* existence at all, but were mere creatures of fancy. Of those that did really exist, as the sun, moon, stars, animals, or the spirits of departed men, though it was true that they had an actual ex-

6 Honour and majesty *are* before him: strength [q] and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.

[q] Ps. lxiii. 2.

7 Give [r] unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

[r] Jude 25.

istence, yet it was also true that they had no existence *as gods*, or as entitled to worship; and hence it was also true that the worship offered to them was as vain as that which was offered to mere beings of the imagination. This verse is extracted literally from 1 Chron. xvi. 26. The Hebrew is the same. ¶ *But the* LORD *made the heavens.* Jehovah *created* the heavenly hosts, and therefore he is the true God, and is entitled to worship. The power of *creation*—of causing anything to exist where there was nothing before—must pertain to God alone, and is the highest act of Divinity. No pretended heathen god has that power; no man has that power. The true God has reserved the exercise of that power to himself, and has never, in any instance, imparted it to a created being.

6. *Honour and majesty* are *before him.* This part of the verse is taken literally from 1 Chron. xvi. 27. The meaning is, that that which constitutes honour, glory, majesty, is *in his presence*, or wherever he is. Wherever he manifests himself, there are the exhibitions of honour and majesty. They are always the accompaniments of his presence. ¶ *Strength and beauty* are *in his sanctuary.* This is slightly varied from the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xvi. 27. The word rendered *strength* is in both places the same. The word rendered *beauty* here — תִּפְאֶרֶת, *tiphereth* — is in 1 Chron. xvi. 27 חֶדְוָה, *hhedvah—joy* or *gladness.* The word here rendered *sanctuary* — מִקְדָּשׁ, *mikdosh*,—is in 1 Chron. xvi. 27—מָקוֹם, *makom*,—*place.* These variations are such as to show that the psalm is not a mere extract, but that it was altered of design, and adapted to the occasion on which it was to be employed,—confirming the supposition that it may have been used in the re-dedication of the temple after the return from the captivity. The word *sanctuary* refers to the holy place where God dwells; his sacred abode, whether his residence in heaven, or the temple on earth as the place of his earthly habitation. When it is said that "*strength*" is there, it means that the dwelling-place of God is the source of *power*, or that power emanates from thence; that is, from God himself. When it is said that "beauty" is there, the meaning is, that whatever is fitted to charm by loveliness; whatever is a real ornament; whatever makes the world attractive; whatever beautifies and adorns creation, has its home in God; it proceeds from him. It may be added that whatever there is of *power* to reform the world, and convert sinners; whatever there is to turn men from their vicious and abandoned course of life; whatever there is to make the world better and happier, proceeds from the "sanctuary"—the church of God. Whatever there is that truly adorns society, and makes it more lovely and attractive; whatever there is that diffuses a charm over domestic and social life; whatever there is that makes the world more lovely or more desirable to live in,—more courteous, more gentle, more humane, more kind, more forgiving,—has its home in the "sanctuary," or emanates from the church of God.

7. *Give unto the* LORD. Ascribe unto the Lord,—to Jehovah. This is extracted literally from 1 Chron. xvi. 28. ¶ *O ye kindreds of the people.* Heb., *Families* of the people:—people, *as* united by family ties. The idea is that of worship not merely as individuals, nor as a mere *aggregate* of individuals united by no common bonds, but as those united by strong ties; bound by blood and affection; constituted into communities. It is

8 Give unto the LORD the glory [1] *due unto* his name: bring an offering, [s] and come into his courts.

9 O worship the LORD in the [2] beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

[1] *of.* [s] Heb. xiii. 15.

10 Say among the heathen, [t] *that* the LORD reigneth: [u] the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

[2] Or, *glorious sanctuary.*
[t] Ps. xlvi. 6, 10. [u] Rev. xix. 6.

a call on such to worship God in their capacity *as* thus bound together; —to come *as* families and to worship God. In other words, it is a call *on* families *as such* to acknowledge God. A family is a proper place where to honour God. When the same joy pervades all hearts in prosperity, and when all are alike made sorrowful in adversity, there is an evident fitness that all should unite in the same worship of God; and that, as in all other things they have common interests, sympathies, and affections, so they should have in religion,—in the service of their Creator. ¶ *Give unto the* LORD *glory and strength.* That is, Proclaim that these belong to God; or, worship him as a God of glory and power.

8. *Give unto the* LORD *the glory* due unto *his name.* This also is literally taken from 1 Chron. xvi. (ver. 28). The margin here is, as in Hebrew, *of his name*:—the honour of his name. The idea is that which is expressed in our translation. Bring to God what is *due* to him; or, render such an acknowledgment as he deserves and claims. Acknowledge him *as* God, and acknowledge him to be *such* a God as he is. Let the honour due to God as such be given him; and let the honour due to him, for the *character* which he actually has, be ascribed to him. ¶ *Bring an offering.* This is language taken from the temple-worship, and means that God is to be worshipped, in the manner which he has prescribed, as a suitable expression of his majesty. The word here rendered *offering*—מִנְחָה, *minhhah*—is that which is commonly used to denote a *bloodless* offering—a thank-offering. See Notes on Isa. i.

13. ¶ *And come into his courts.* The courts or areas around the tabernacle and the temple, where sacrifices were made, and where the people worshipped. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 12.

9. *O worship the* LORD *in the beauty of holiness.* This verse is literally taken from 1 Chron. xvi. 29, 30. The margin here is, *in the glorious sanctuary.* The Septuagint, *ἐν αὐλῇ ἁγίᾳ—in his holy court.* So the Latin Vulgate. On the meaning of the expression, see Notes on Ps. xxix. 2. ¶ *Fear before him, all the earth.* All lands; all people. The word rendered *fear* means properly to writhe, to twist, to be in pain; and then, to tremble, to quake, to be afraid. The word *tremble* would perhaps best express the idea here. It is that solemn awe produced by the sense of the Divine presence and majesty which causes trembling. It denotes profound reverence for God.

10. *Say among the heathen.* Among the nations; all nations. Make this proclamation everywhere. This is changed from the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xvi. The language there is, "Fear before him, all the earth; the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved: let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth." The sense is, however, essentially the same. The idea here is, "Make universal proclamation that Jehovah is King." ¶ That *the* LORD *reigneth.* See Notes on Ps. xciii. 1. ¶ *The world also shall be established,* etc. Under the reign of God. The meaning is, that the world is fixed or immovable. It has its place, and it cannot be moved out of it. The government of God is fixed

11 Let [v] the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.

12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, [w] and the people with his truth.

[v] Ps. lxix. 34.

[w] Rev. xix. 11; xx. 13.

and stable. It is not temporary, changing, vacillating, like the dynasties of the earth, but is stedfast and abiding, and is well represented by the earth—so fixed and firm that nothing can move it from its place. ¶ *He shall judge the people righteously.* The people of all lands; the nations of the earth. See Notes on Ps. lxvii. 4.

11. *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.* Let all worlds be full of joy, as they are all interested in the fact here stated. The universe is one. It has been made by the same hand; it is under the control of the same mind; it is governed by the same laws. The God who reigns on earth reigns in heaven; and what affects one part of the universe affects all. Hence, in all the manifestation of the character of God, whether made in heaven or in the earth, it is proper to call on *all* the universe to partake in the general joy. ¶ *Let the sea roar.* In praise to God. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to call on inanimate things to praise God. Comp. Ps. cxlviii. 7–9. The same thing is common in all poetry. ¶ *And the fulness thereof.* Its abundance. That which fills it. All that it contains. That is, Let all that dwell in the seas praise God. His reign is an occasion for universal gladness. All in the inanimate world;—all among the irrational tribes of being;—all in the air, in the waters, or on the earth, have occasion for praise, and would render praise if they could appreciate the wisdom and goodness evinced in their creation. Though unconscious, the lower creatures *seem* to celebrate his praise; but man only can give an intelligent utterance to thanksgiving.

12. *Let the field be joyful*, etc. This is taken—with the change of a single letter, not affecting the sense—from 1 Chron. xvi. 32, 33. It is a call on the fields—the cultivated portions of the earth—to rejoice in the reign of God. As if conscious of the beauty with which he clothes them, and of the happiness which they confer on man in their beauty and in the abundance of their productions, they are called on to praise God. ¶ *Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.* The forests—the oaks, the cedars, the pines, that wave with so much majesty. If they were conscious of their own magnificence and beauty,—if they could see how much wisdom and goodness God has lavished on them, in their forms, their branches, their leaves, their flowers, their fruit,—if they could know how much they are made to accomplish in rendering the world beautiful, and in contributing to the happiness of man,—if they understood what a bare, bleak, cold, desert world this would be but for them, they, too, would have abundant occasion for praise and joy.

13. *Before the* LORD. This is altered from 1 Chron. xvi. The language there is simply, "Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth." The meaning here is, that all these things have occasion to praise the Lord whenever he appears; to rejoice in the presence of Him who has made them what they are. ¶ *For he cometh.* That is, he will come. He will manifest himself as a righteous judge. He will come to reign over the world, and there will be in his reign universal occasion for joy. The allusion would seem to be to some future time when God

would come to reign among men; to dispense justice; to vindicate his people, and to establish truth. The *language* is such as would properly refer to the anticipated reign of the Messiah, as a reign of righteousness, and is such language as is frequently employed in the Old Testament to denote the character of his reign. There is no reason to doubt that this psalm may be *designed* to describe the reign of the Messiah, and that the psalmist in this language may have looked forward to that future kingdom of righteousness and peace. ¶ *For he cometh to judge the earth,* etc. See this language explained in the Notes on Ps. lxxii. 2–4; Isa. xi. 2–5. What is here stated occurs now, wherever the gospel reigns in the hearts of men; it will be fully accomplished when the Lord Jesus shall come again and judge the world.

PSALM XCVII.

The author of this psalm is unknown, and the occasion on which it was composed cannot be ascertained. Its structure is similar to that of the two preceding psalms, and it *may* have been written by the same author, and at the same time; but it is of so general a nature that it may be employed at all times, and in all lands. From the contents, it would seem not improbable that it may have been composed in view of some victory over the enemies of the Hebrew people, and especially over idolaters; but when this occurred, if the psalm had such an origin, it is impossible now to determine. Venema supposes that it had reference to the times of the Maccabees, but of that there is no proof. Many of the expressions in the psalm are taken from the older portions of the Scriptures; and it has been remarked (Hengstenberg) that none are taken from the writings after the return from the Babylonish captivity. From this it has been inferred that it must have been composed before the exile. Still, this inference is not certain, for a writer after the return from Babylon *may* have made his references solely to the more ancient writings of his country.

The author of the Septuagint version regarded this as a psalm of David, when the land was restored to peace. The title in that version is, Τῷ Δαυὶδ, ὅτε ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ καθίσταται;—"by David, when his land was restored," (or, was at peace). The same title occurs in the Latin Vulgate. Luther entitles it, "Of Christ and his kingdom." The general subject of the psalm is the sovereignty or the supremacy of God, and the manifestation of that sovereignty or supremacy in vindicating his people, and in bringing to pass events which gave them ground of confidence and rejoicing in him.

Perhaps the most that can be said now on the origin and design of the psalm is, that these *six* psalms (xcv.–c.) seem to have been composed with reference to the same occasion, and may have been designed to be used together. They are similar in their contents and structure; and they refer to the same thing—the sovereignty or the supremacy of God. Bishop Horsley regards these psalms as "one entire prophetic poem." "Each psalm," says he, "has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom. The xcvth Psalm asserts Jehovah's Godhead and power over all nature, and exhorts his people to serve him. In Psalm xcvith, all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the xcviith Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, and the Just One is glorified. In the xcviiith Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for himself; he hath remembered his mercy towards the house of Israel; he comes to judge the whole world. . . . In the xcixth, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion [the visible church], reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. . . . In the cth Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting." There may be something fanciful in this supposition, but the views thus expressed indicate the general course of thought in this group of psalms.

In this psalm (the xcviith) the particular point, then, is, that Jehovah is supreme over all the world; that the idols are proved to be nought; and that the righteous are vindicated.

The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. A description of the majesty and glory of God as a sovereign, vers. 1–6.

PSALM XCVII.

THE [x] LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice; [y] let the [1] multitude of isles [z] be glad *thereof.*

x Ps. xcix. 1. *y* Ps. ii. 11.
[1] *many*, or, *great.* *z* Isa. lx. 9.

2 Clouds [a] and darkness *are* round about him: righteousness [b] and judgment *are* the [2] habitation of his throne.

a 1 Kings viii. 12. *b* Ps. lxxxix. 14.
[2] Or, *establishment.*

Clouds and darkness are around him; fire goes before him; the lightnings play, and the earth trembles; the hills melt, and are dissolved; the heavens in their splendour declare his righteousness.

II. In view of this, all idol images and gods are confounded, and are shown to be nothing; and the friends of the true God have occasion for joy, vers. 7–9.

III. The prosperity and happiness of the righteous under the reign of God, vers. 10–12. God will deliver them; light is sown for them in darkness; gladness is their portion, and they are called on to rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

1. *The* LORD *reigneth.* See Notes on Ps. xciii. 1. This is the general fact to be dwelt upon; this is the foundation of joy and praise. The universe is not without a sovereign. It is not the abode of anarchy. It is not the production of chance. It is not subject to mere physical laws. It is not under the control of evil. It is under the government of a GOD:—a wise, holy, intelligent, just, benevolent Being, who rules it well, and who presides over all its affairs. If there is anything for which we should rejoice, it is that there is One Mind, everlasting and most glorious, who presides over the universe, and conducts all things according to his own wise and eternal plan. ¶ *Let the earth rejoice.* The earth itself; all parts of it; all that dwell upon it. As the earth everywhere derives whatever it has of fertility, beauty, grandeur, or stability, from God,—as order, beauty, productiveness are diffused everywhere over it,—as it has received so many proofs of the Divine beneficence towards it, it has occasion for universal joy. ¶ *Let the multitude of isles be glad* thereof. Marg., *Many*, or *great isles.* The Hebrew is *many.* So the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Chaldee, and the Syriac. The eye of the psalmist is evidently on the many islands which are scattered over the sea. Not merely the continents—the extended countries where nations dwell—have occasion for joy, but the beautiful islands,—the spots of earth which have risen from the deep, and which are covered with fruits and flowers,—these, too, have occasion to rejoice:—to rejoice that God has raised them from the waters; that he keeps them from being overflowed or washed away; that he clothes them with beauty; that he makes them the abode of happy life; that he places them in the wastes of the ocean as he does the stars in the wastes of the sky, to beautify the universe. The *idea* in the verse is, that *all* the earth has cause to rejoice that Jehovah reigns.

2. *Clouds and darkness* are *round about him.* This is a description of the majesty of God, derived probably from the manner in which he manifested himself at Mount Sinai. Ex. xix. 16–19. God is often thus represented as encompassed with clouds. Ps. civ. 3; Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 7–15. The word rendered *clouds* is the common word to denote a cloud; the word translated *darkness* means properly *thick clouds, cloudy darkness, gloom.* It would refer to a cloud considered as dark, and as casting a gloom over the world. There is no reference here to the fact that the dealings of God are dark, mysterious, and incomprehensible, *as if* he were surrounded by clouds and darkness. This is indeed often true; but that is not the truth taught here.

3 A fire [c] goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

5 The hills melted [d] like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see [e] his glory.

7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast

[c] Dan. vii. 10; Heb. xii. 29.

[d] Judges v. 5; Micah i. 4.

[e] Num. xiv. 21; Matt. xxv. 31.

The meaning here is, that the character of God is fitted to fill the mind with solemn awe, or with emotions of sublimity. ¶ *Righteousness and judgment.* He is a righteous God; he is a God who will execute just judgment. Though he is encompassed with clouds, yet he is a just God; and this is fitted to impress the mind with profound reverence. That he will do right we may be assured, even when he covers himself with clouds; the fact that he will thus do right is fitted to calm the minds of those who love and obey him, and at the same time to fill the minds of the wicked with alarm. ¶ Are *the habitation of his throne.* Marg., *establishment.* The Hebrew word means *place;*—the place where one stands, or where one abides; a habitation, or a dwelling. It then means a foundation or basis, Ps. lxxxix. 14; civ. 5. This would seem to be the idea here. His throne rests upon, or is sustained by, justice and righteousness. Nothing else would uphold the government of the universe; nothing else will sustain any government.

3. *A fire goeth before him.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 13; l. 3. ¶ *And burneth up his enemies round about.* Is especially directed against his foes. That is, he manifests himself as a just God, inflicting vengeance on his enemies. He comes to reign, and in his reign all his foes will be destroyed.

4. *His lightnings enlightened the world,* etc. See Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 18. Comp. Ps. civ. 32; Hab. iii. 6–10.

5. *The hills melted like wax at the presence of the* LORD. They seemed to flow down as if they were like melted wax:—that is, they could not stand before him. The most firm, solid, lofty things were as nothing in his presence. Comp. Rev. xx. 11; Judges v. 5; Micah i. 4; Nah. i. 5. The object here is to describe the sublimity, the greatness, the majesty of God, as if nothing could stand before him; as if everything fled away when he approached. There is perhaps a general allusion to his glory and power as manifested at Sinai. ¶ *At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.* The Creator and Ruler of the entire world. The God who thus manifested himself is not a local Deity, or the God of a particular nation or country, but the God of the whole world, before whom all created things are as nothing.

6. *The heavens declare his righteousness.* See Notes on Ps. l. 6. Comp. Notes on Ps. xix. 1. ¶ *And all the people see his glory.* As manifested in the heavens, and in the power which he puts forth on the earth. That is, They have the opportunity of seeing it; it is made manifest in all his works. They see what in fact *is* a manifestation of his glory, to wit, his great and wondrous works. It is not affirmed that they *appreciate* all this, or that they see this *to be* a manifestation of his glory,—which would not be true,—but that they see what is *in fact* a revelation of his greatness, his wisdom, and his power.

7. *Confounded be all they that serve graven images.* Heb., "Let them be ashamed." The idea is, that they would be disappointed. They would find that these were not real gods; that their trust in them was vain; and that they had evinced

themselves of idols: worship *f* him, all *ye* gods.

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.

9 For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

10 Ye that love the LORD, hate *g* evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth *h* them out of the hand of the wicked.

f Heb. i. 6. *g* Prov. iii. 7; Rom. xii. 9. *h* Dan. iii. 28.

great folly in relying on that which could not aid them in the day of necessity. See Notes on Job vi. 20; Ps. xxii. 5; xxv. 2. Comp. Isa. xx. 5. What is here affirmed of the worshippers of idols will be found to be true at last of all who put their trust in anything but the true God. ¶ *That boast themselves of idols.* That worship idols, and glory in them as if they could save; or, that glory in their own idol-gods as if they were more powerful than those of other people. It would not be unnatural that nations which worshipped idols should glory in them, or that one people should boast of their gods as more powerful—more worthy to be trusted—than those which were worshipped in other lands. ¶ *Worship him, all* ye *gods.* Heb., *Elohim.* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "all his angels." The original word *Elohim* is that which is commonly applied to the true God (Gen. i. 1, *et sæpe*), though it may be applied to angels, or to magistrates. See Notes on Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6. On the general meaning of this passage, and the question respecting its reference to the Messiah, see Notes on Heb. i. 6. The reference here, according to the quotation in Heb. i. 6, is to the angels. The original word will admit of this interpretation, and the entire structure of the psalm will justify its application to the Messiah.

8. *Zion heard, and was glad.* The good news came to Zion that all the idols of the heathen were confounded or were overcome:—that is, that the Lord reigned. There was joy in Zion that the evils and abominations of idolatry were at an end, and that the worship of Jehovah had taken the place of idol-worship. The idea is, that the displacement of idols, or the fact that they had ceased to be worshipped, was a cause of joy to the worshippers of the true God. Whatever tends to remove the worship of idols from the world, and to extend and establish the worship of the living God, is an occasion of gladness. ¶ *And the daughters of Judah rejoiced,* etc. See Notes on Ps. xlviii. 11. Woman has special occasion to rejoice in the spread of the true religion. It is that only which has lifted her from a state of deep degradation; which has elevated her to be a companion instead of a slave; which has made her the intelligent wife and mother, rather than the mere inmate of a harem.

9. *For thou,* LORD, art *high above all the earth.* See Notes on Ps. lxxxiii. 18. ¶ *Thou art exalted far above all gods.* See Notes on Ps. xcv. 3.

10. *Ye that love the* LORD, *hate evil.* Show your love for the Lord *by* hating all that is evil; that is, all that he hates, or that is evil in his sight. There can be no true love for God where evil is not hated in all its forms, since it is the object of the Divine abhorrence. We cannot be like God unless we love what he loves, and hate what he hates. There is nothing more clearly affirmed in the Scriptures than that in order to the love of God there must be the hatred of all that is wrong, and that where there is the love of sin in the heart, there can be no true religion. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 16–20. ¶ *He preserveth the souls of his saints.* The *lives* of his saints, or his holy ones. That is, he guards them from danger,

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice [i] in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks [1] at the remembrance of his holiness.

[i] Phil. iv. 4.

[1] Or, *to the memorial.*

and watches over them with a careful eye. See Ps. iii. 8; xxxvii. 39. ¶ *He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.* That is, he often does this; they may expect that he will do it. He does not, indeed, always deliver them from the temporal calamities which wicked men bring upon them —for they are not unfrequently persecuted and wronged; but ultimately he will deliver them altogether from the power of the wicked. In heaven none of the machinations of wicked men can reach them. At the same time it is also true that God often interposes in behalf of his people, and delivers them *as such* from the designs of the wicked:—that is, he delivers them because they *are* righteous, or because they *are* his friends. Comp. Notes on Dan. iii. 16, 17, 24, 25; vi. 18–23.

11. *Light is sown for the righteous.* That is, There *is* light for the righteous; or, they shall be brought into light, though they may be for a time in darkness. The word rendered *sown* —זָרַע, *zarua*—is from a verb which properly denotes to scatter, to disperse,—as seed is scattered or dispersed when sown in a field. It is hence used with reference to moral subjects, as to sow righteousness, Prov. xi. 18; to sow iniquity, Prov. xxii. 8; to sow mischief, Job iv. 8;—that is, these things are scattered or sown, as seed is in a field, and produce a corresponding harvest. Thus light is scattered abroad, and will produce an appropriate harvest—a harvest of joy. It will spring up around the righteous, and he shall reap that which light tends to produce—happiness, intelligence, and peace. The figure of *sowing* light is an unusual one, but the meaning is plain. It is, that the righteous will not always be in darkness; that there is in preparation for him a harvest of joy; that it will as certainly be produced as a harvest will from grain that is sown; that though there may be present calamities, there will be ultimate peace and triumph. ¶ *And gladness for the upright in heart.* The word *gladness* here—joy, or rejoicing—is parallel to the word *light.* Joy or gladness is *sown* for the righteous; that is, arrangements are made for producing joy, as preparations are made by sowing seed for a harvest. The world is full of arrangements for conferring happiness on the righteous.

12. *Rejoice in the* LORD, *ye righteous.* See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 1. ¶ *And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Marg., *to the memorial* (comp. Ps. xxx. 4). The idea is, *to the memory of his holiness;* that is, when his holiness comes before the mind; when it is remembered; when it is thought of. Give thanks or rejoice, (*a*) that God *is* holy; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that there is One eternally pure who presides over the universe; that there is One who will always do what is right; (*b*) that such a Being is *our* God,—our covenant-keeping God; that we may look to him, trust in him, enjoy him. Wicked men do not rejoice that there is a God at all, and especially that God is a *holy* God; but it is one of the characteristics of true piety to rejoice in the thought that there *is* a God, and that he is perfectly holy,—and hence to feel conscious happiness whenever his name is mentioned, and whenever his attributes are referred to. The highest source of joy for man is that there *is* a God, and that God is exactly *what* he is, pure and holy. It would be a source of deepest sorrow if there were no God, or if God were in any respect, even the slightest, a different being from what he is.

PSALM XCVIII.

A Psalm.

O SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right [k] hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

2 The [l] LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he [1] openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

3 He [m] hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the

[k] Ex. xv. 6; Isa. lix. 16. [l] Isa. lii. 10.
[1] Or, *revealed.* [m] Luke i. 54, 72.

PSALM XCVIII.

This is entitled simply "A Psalm." But who is its author is unknown. It is similar in its design and structure to the group of Psalms (xcv.-c.) in which it is found. Bishop Horsley, in accordance with the views which he has of the design of the group (see the Introd. to Ps. xcvii.), supposes that this psalm refers to the restoration of the Jewish people. It is a psalm which would have been appropriate at the dedication of the temple after the Babylonish captivity, and may have been composed for that occasion. It is of so general a character, however, that it is appropriate to all times in the church. The psalm does not admit of a particular analysis.

1. *O sing unto the* LORD *a new song.* Comp. Ps. xxxiii. 3; xcvi. 1. ¶ *For he hath done marvellous things.* Things fitted to excite wonder, or to fill the mind with astonishment. See Ps. lxxvii. 14; lxxxvi. 10. ¶ *His right hand.* The instrument by which we execute any purpose. Comp. Isa. lix. 16; lxiii. 5. ¶ *And his holy arm.* The arm of his holiness; that is, his arm put forth in a righteous cause, or vindicating that which is right. ¶ *Hath gotten him the victory.* Literally, *has wrought salvation for him:*—for himself, or in his own cause. The victory—the salvation—was really in defence of his own government; in maintaining his own authority against those who set themselves in opposition to it. What is here said may be applied to all that God does. It is really in his own cause, in order to maintain the principles of his own administration.

2. *The* LORD *hath made known his salvation.* See Notes on Isa. lii. 10. This does not mean that he had merely *proclaimed* his salvation, or his willingness to save, but that he had *shown* his salvation—his power to save—by some public act. What the particular act referred to here was, it is impossible now to ascertain. Such acts, however, have been often performed, as when he delivered his people out of Egypt; when he restored the Hebrews from the Babylonish captivity; and whenever he interposed in their behalf in times of danger. He has done it also in the gift of a Saviour; he does it in every revival of true religion; he does it in the salvation of a single sinner. ¶ *His righteousness.* His righteous character; his faithfulness to his people. Whenever he interposes, it is in behalf of that which is right; and such interposition, therefore, is an illustration of his character *as* just. It is in this way we learn that his character is that of a just God. ¶ *Hath he openly showed.* Marg., as in Heb., *revealed.* He has disclosed it, or made it manifest. ¶ *In the sight of the heathen.* The nations; or, so that the nations could see it:—that is, the nations outside of Palestine. His acts were so public—so remarkable—that surrounding nations could learn what was his true character. Thus it was when he delivered his people from Egyptian bondage; and thus also frequently in the history of his people.

3. *He hath remembered his mercy.* Comp. Notes on Luke i. 54, 55, 72, where this passage in the Psalms was not improbably referred to by Mary and Zacharias. The idea is, that God had called to mind his promise of mercy to his people; that he had not suffered it to pass out of his recollection; that he had kept his word. ¶ *And his truth.* He has kept his

house of Israel: all the [n] ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

6 With trumpets and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

n Rom. x. 12, 18.

promise; he has shown that he is a God of truth. ¶ *Toward the house of Israel.* Towards his people. ¶ *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.* This appears to have been quoted from Isa. lii. 10. See Notes on that passage. The resemblance in the language is so strong as to make it probable that the psalm was composed after the times of Isaiah, and not improbably to be used (as remarked above) in the dedication of the temple after the captivity. The whole psalm would be appropriate to celebrate that deliverance; while, at the same time, like the language in Isaiah, it would be adapted to celebrate a higher deliverance—under the Messiah—of which that was an emblem.

4. *Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD. By singing; by instruments of music. See Notes on Ps. xcv. 1. ¶ *All the earth.* All lands. The event is of sufficient importance to be celebrated by all nations. It is a matter of universal exultation and joy. ¶ *Make a loud noise.* The word here used—פָּצַח—*patzahh*, means properly to break in pieces; then, to break forth, as a shout of triumph or joy, as if the joy could be no longer confined or repressed. See Notes on Isa. xiv. 7. The word occurs only in the following places (besides that which is before us), in all of which it is rendered *break forth.* Isa. xiv. 7; xliv. 23; xlix. 13; lii. 9; liv. 1; lv. 12,—(except in Micah iii. 3, where it it is rendered *break*). It is expressive of irrepressible joy. ¶ *Rejoice and sing praise.* This very combination of the words, "Break forth into joy, sing together"—the same words in Hebrew as here—occurs in Isa. lii. 9, showing, as above remarked, that the psalm was composed after the times of Isaiah, and probably had reference to the same event.

5. *Sing unto the* LORD *with the harp.* A song or psalm accompanied by the harp. On the harp. See Notes on Isa. v. 12. ¶ *And the voice of a psalm.* The voice in singing; a musical voice. Let it not be mere instrumental music, but let that be accompanied with the voice uttering intelligible sounds or words. The only proper use of instrumental music in the worship of God is to deepen the impression which the *words* are adapted to make; to secure a better influence of truth on the heart.

6. *With trumpets.* The word here used is uniformly rendered *trumpets* in the Scriptures. Num. x. 2, 8–10; xxxi. 6; *et al.* The trumpet was mainly employed for convening a public assembly for worship, or for assembling the hosts for battle. The original word—חֲצֹצְרָה, *hhatzotzerah*—is supposed to have been designed to imitate "the broken pulse-like sound of the trumpet, like the Latin *taratantara.*" So the German *trarara*, and the Arabic *hadadera.* The word here used was given to the long, straight trumpet. ¶ *And sound of cornet*, etc. The word here translated *cornet* is also usually rendered *trumpet*, Ex. xix. 16, 19; xx. 18; Lev. xxv. 9; Josh. vi. 4–6, 8, 9, 13, 16, 20; *et sæpe.* It is rendered *cornet* in 1 Chron. xv. 28; 2 Chron. xv. 14; Hos. v. 8. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate it is here rendered *horn*—the meaning of *cornet.* The name—שׁוֹפָר, *shophar*—is supposed to have been given to this instrument from its clear and shrill sound, like the English name *clarion.* It was either made *of* horn, or similar *to*

7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

8 Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together

9 Before the LORD: for [o] he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

o Rev. i. 7.

a horn—an instrument curved *like* a horn. The instrument was in frequent use among the Hebrews.

7. *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.* See Notes on Ps. xcvi. 11. ¶ *The world, and they that dwell therein.* The habitable world—the land—in contradistinction from the sea. Let there be universal praise on the water and the land.

8. *Let the floods clap* their *hands.* The rivers. Let them join in the universal praise. As if conscious of their beauty, their grandeur, their usefulness;—as if sensible that all this was conferred by God; as if rejoicing in the goodness of God manifested to them, and through them,—let *them* unite in the universal praise. Comp. Notes on Isa. lv. 12. ¶ *Let the hills be joyful together.* The mountains—in view of the goodness of God towards them—crowning them with beauty—clothing them with sublimity and grandeur—let them also rejoice in God as *their* God. Let all nature thus join in praise.

9. *Before the* LORD, *for he cometh to judge the earth,* etc. This verse is essentially the same as Ps. xcvi. 13. See Notes on that verse. The psalm calls for universal praise. The very *reading* of the psalm—so joyous—so jubilant—so animated—so exulting—is fitted to awaken the mind to praise; to rouse it to thankfulness; to fill it with joy. One cannot read the psalm without being a happier man; without being lifted above the world; without lofty views of God; without a feeling that he is worthy of this universal praise; without recognising that we are in a world where the mind should be joyful; that we are under the dominion of a God whose reign should fill the mind with gladness.

PSALM XCIX.

This psalm is closely linked in its general character and design with those which have gone before (xcv.-xcviii.), and with the one following (c.),—forming a connected group or series. The general subject is the kingship of Jehovah, or the foundations of praise derived from the fact that he reigns, or is king. As the foundation of praise on this account, reference is made in this group of psalms to his attributes; to what he has done in the works of creation; to what he has done for his people; and to the certainty that he will come ultimately to rule over all the earth, and to exercise just judgment among men.

This psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. A statement of the fact that Jehovah reigns, and that this should make a deep impression on the world; that the people should tremble; that the earth should be moved, ver. 1.

II. Reasons for this, or reasons why he should be reverenced and adored by mankind, vers. 2-9. These reasons are two:

(1) The first is derived from the fact that he is a holy and a righteous God, and is therefore worthy of universal adoration, vers. 2-5.

(2) The second is derived from what he has done for his people: for his merciful interposition in times of trouble, when Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel called upon his name; and from the fact that he answered his people when they cried unto him; and from the manner in which it was done, vers. 6-9. He had shown himself ready to hear prayer; he had come for their protection in the cloudy pillar, he had answered their supplications, and had forgiven them. He had not swept them wholly away, or cut them off, but had spared them, and had shown mercy to them.

PSALM XCIX.

THE [p] LORD reigneth; let [q] the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth [1] be moved.

2 The LORD *is* great in Zion,

[p] Ps. xciii. 1. [q] Jer. v. 22. [1] *stagger.*

and he *is* high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great [r] and terrible name; *for* it *is* holy.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment: thou [s] dost

[r] Deut. xxviii. 58. [s] Job xxxvi. 5—7.

1. *The* LORD *reigneth.* The Lord, Jehovah, is king. See Ps. xciii. 1. ¶ *Let the people tremble.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Let the people rage"—or, be angry:—as if the idea were that God reigned, *although* the people were enraged, and were opposed to him. The true meaning of the word used here, however, is *tremble,*—properly signifying to be moved, disturbed, disquieted, thrown into commotion; and then it may mean to be moved with anger, Prov. xxix. 9; Isa. xxviii. 21; or with grief, 2 Sam. xviii. 33: or with fear, Ps. iv. 4; or with joy, Jer. xxxiii. 9. Hence it means to be agitated or moved with fear or reverence; and it refers here to the reverence or awe which one has in the conscious presence of God. ¶ *He sitteth* between *the cherubims.* See Notes on Ps. lxxx. 1. ¶ *Let the earth be moved.* Marg., *stagger.* The word means to move or quake. It occurs nowhere else. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 7. See also Hab. iii. 6, 10.

2. *The Lord* is *great in Zion.* Comp. Ps. xcv. 3. The meaning here is, not that God is *absolutely* great, —which is indeed true,—but that there is a sense in which he has shown himself great *in Zion;* that is, in his manifestations toward his own people. He has evinced power in their behalf; he has interposed for them in times of danger; he has so discomfited their enemies as to show that he is a great God—a God worthy to be adored. ¶ *And he* is *high above all the people.* Above all the nations. He has them under his control. He rules over all. The God who rules in Zion also rules all the nations of the earth; and his people, therefore, have special occasion to praise him.

3. *Let them praise thy great and terrible name.* The word rendered *terrible* means *to be feared* or *reverenced;* that is, his name—his being —he himself—is fitted to inspire awe and reverence. The word *them* here refers to the nations over whom God reigns. It is a call on them to praise their king and their God. ¶ For *it* is *holy.* See Notes on Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8. The fact that God *is* holy —that he is pure and righteous—that he cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence—is a just foundation for universal praise. Who could worship or honour a God who was *not* pure and holy?

4. *The king's strength.* The word *king* here undoubtedly refers to God *as* a king, ver. 1. The word rendered *strength,* means power, force; and the reference here is to what constitutes the main strength or power of his character and government. It is rendered in the Septuagint τιμὴ—*honour.* So in the Latin Vulgate—*honor.* De Wette renders it, "The praise of the king who loves judgment." So Rosenmüller, "Let them praise the strength—the power—of the king who loves judgment." But perhaps our common version best expresses the sense, that whatever there is in the character of the "king," that is God, which constitutes strength, or gives power to his administration, is favourable to justice, or will be exerted in the cause of right. God's essential character; all the acts of his power; all the demonstrations of his authority, will be in favour of justice, and may be re-

establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *t for* [1] he *is* holy.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they

t 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. [1] Or, *it.*

lied on as sustaining the righteous cause. It is not the *mere* exertion of power,—it is power that is always exercised in favour of right; and this lays the foundation of praise. We could not praise a being of mere *power*, or one who was merely *almighty*, without respect to his moral character. It is only when the character is such that power will be exerted in favour of that which is right and just that it becomes the proper subject of praise. ¶ *Loveth judgment.* Is always on the side of justice and right. He so loves justice that his power will be put forth only in behalf of that which is right. God shows this by his law, and by all the acts of his administration. ¶ *Thou dost establish equity.* That which is equal and just; alike by thy law, and by thine interpositions. All that thou doest, and all that thou dost appoint, is in favour of that which is equal and just. ¶ *Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.* That which is just; that which ought to be done. Thou doest this among thy people; thou doest it in their relation to the surrounding nations. All the acts of thy administration tend to the establishment of that which is right.

5. *Exalt ye the* LORD *our God.* See Notes on Ps. xxx. 1. The meaning is, Let his name be, as it were, lifted up on high, so as to be conspicuous or seen from afar. Let it be done with a lofty voice; let it be with ascriptions of praise. ¶ *And worship at his footstool.* By humble prostration at his feet. The footstool is that on which the feet rest when one is sitting, and the reference here is to the footstool on which the feet of a king rested when he sat on his throne or chair of state. To worship at his footstool—comp. 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Ps. cxxxii. 7—denotes the deepest humility and the profoundest prostration and reverence. It is as if we could not look on his face, or on his throne, or on his gorgeous and magnificent robes, but bowed our heads in lowly reverence, and deemed it sufficient honour to lie low before that on which his feet rested. To show the dignity and majesty of God, the earth itself is represented as being merely his footstool; as being, in comparison with the heaven —the place of his seat—his "throne," only as the footstool is as compared with the splendid chair of state. Isa. lxvi. 1; Matt. v. 34, 35. ¶ For *he* is *holy.* See ver. 3. Marg., *it is holy.* The translation in the text best expresses the sense. The fact that God is *holy* is a reason for lowly and profound prostration before him.

6. *Moses and Aaron among his priests.* Among the ministers of religion; or, as officiating in the service of God. Let them come as representatives of their order—as representing those who conduct the public worship of God, and join in his praise. The idea is, that all mankind should join in his praise, and those here mentioned as among the most eminent of those who were engaged in directing the public worship of God. Moses could be called a "priest" only in the most general sense of the term, as having been employed in directing and arranging for public worship, and as being of the original tribe of Levi, from whom the whole sacerdotal order sprang. ¶ *And Samuel among them that call upon his name.* Among those who are true worshippers, in distinction from the priests who were specially appointed to the public service of God. The idea is, that praise should be offered by *all* classes:—by priests

[u] called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in [v] the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

u Ex. xv. 25; 1 Sam. vii. 9.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou [w] wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

v Ex. xxxiii. 9.
w Neh. ix. 27—31; Ps. lxxxix. 33.

and by people. As Moses and Aaron were among the most eminent of the former class, so Samuel was among the most distinguished of those who were *not* of the priestly order. These were *representative men;* and the meaning is, that all who were of their order or rank—priests and people—should unite in the worship of God. ¶ *They called upon the* LORD. They *did* call upon the Lord; they worshipped Jehovah. They gave the influence of their names and of their position to his public service. They thus showed their sense of the propriety of praising God; they gave the countenance of their example to public worship and praise; and the benefits which they received in answer to prayer showed the propriety and advantage of thus publicly acknowledging God. ¶ *And he answered them.* They did not call upon him in vain. He heard their prayers. He bestowed blessings on them in connexion with their worship. It was not a useless thing to praise and worship him. The worship of God is thus commended to us not merely from the propriety of the act itself, but from its advantages. It is unnecessary to refer to particular instances in the history of these men when their prayers were answered. Their lives were full of such instances—as the lives of all who truly call upon God are now. If a man who prays could *see* all that comes to him every day in answer to prayer—all the things bestowed which he had *desired* in prayer, and which would not have been conferred on him if he had *not* prayed, there would no longer be any doubt on the question whether God answers prayer.

7. *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar.* He spake to the men of other times; to those who called upon his name. It cannot be meant literally that he spake to *Samuel* from the "cloudy pillar"—the pillar which guided the Israelites in the wilderness, unless that term be understood in the general sense as denoting the *Shechinah*—the visible symbol of the Divine presence—the cloud that rested on the ark. The idea is, that God addressed his people in ancient times from the cloud—the symbol of his presence; that he communed with them; that he heard their prayers; that he gave them his commandments; that he interposed in their behalf, and that it was not a vain thing that they worshipped him. All this was as true of Samuel—it is as true now of those who call upon God—as it was of Moses and Aaron. ¶ *They kept his testimonies,* etc. They obeyed his laws, and he thus heard and answered them.

8. *Thou answeredst them, O* LORD *our God.* The reference here is to God as "*our*" God; that is, the language used by those who now worship him is designed to give encouragement in approaching his throne. The God that *we* worship is the same that *they* worshipped; and as he answered them, we may feel assured that he will answer us. ¶ *Thou wast a God that forgavest them.* They were not perfect; they were sinners; they often offended thee, and yet thou didst answer them, and show them mercy. ¶ *Though thou tookest vengeance.* Though thou didst manifest thy displeasure at their misconduct; though thou in thy judgments didst show that thou wast displeased with them; nevertheless thou didst answer them. Sinners as they were, and

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy [x] hill: for the LORD our God *is* holy.

[x] Ps. ii. 6.
[1] Or, *thanksgiving*, Ps. cxlv., *title*.
[2] *the earth*.

PSALM C.

A Psalm of [1] praise.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all [2] ye lands.
2 Serve the LORD with glad-

often as thou didst show thy displeasure at their conduct, yet thou didst hear their prayers and bless them. ¶ *Of their inventions.* The Hebrew word denotes work, deed, doing, conduct. It means here what they *did*:—their sins. There is no allusion to any special *art* or *cunning* in what they did,—as if they had *invented* or found out some new form of sin.

9. *Exalt the* LORD *our God.* See notes on ver. 5. ¶ *And worship at his holy hill.* In ver. 5, this is, *at his footstool.* The *holy hill* refers to Zion, as the seat of the national worship. ¶ *For the* LORD *our God* is *holy.* See ver. 5. This appropriately closes the psalm, by a distinct and solemn statement that the fact that Jehovah is a holy God is a reason for worshipping him. This is at all times the highest reason for adoration and praise.

PSALM C.

This psalm—so beautiful—so grand—so often sung in all lands and languages—completes this *group* of psalms respecting the reign of God, or the reasons for praise as derived from the fact that he reigns. In the previous psalms in this group (xcv.-xcix.) the call to praise had been in some respects local and particular; in this, it is universal. All lands are called on to praise him; all people to worship him as God. The *ground* of this, as stated in the psalm, is that he is their "Maker;" that he is the Creator of all. As all have derived their being from him, they are called on to praise him as their common Creator and Father. So far as the reason here referred to is a ground for praise and worship, it applies to all men now. The nations—the people of the earth—are one. However much they may differ in complexion, in language, in customs, in religion, they have all been formed by the same God; they are all of one family; they are all entitled to the same privileges; they may all have the same access to his throne. The races of men are one; and all should gather around the throne of their common Creator, and render him united praise. This psalm has been sung by millions and hundreds of millions; it will continue to be sung to the end of time.

The psalm is entitled "A Psalm of praise." In the margin, *thanksgiving.* The Septuagint is, "A Psalm of Confession"—εἰς ἐξομολόγησιν. So the Latin Vulgate, and the Chaldee. The Syriac version is, "*anonymous*," or, *without a name*; "concerning Joshua the son of Nun, when he subdued the Ammonites." Luther: "A Psalm of Thanksgiving."

1. *Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. xcv. 1. ¶ *All ye lands.* Marg., as in Heb., *all the earth.* The margin expresses the sense. The idea in the psalm is, that praise did not pertain to one nation only; that it was not appropriate for one people merely; that it should not be confined to the Hebrew people, but that there was a proper ground of praise for *all*; there was that in which all nations, of all languages and conditions, could unite. The ground of that was the fact that they had one Creator, ver. 3. The psalm is based on the unity of the human race; on the fact that there is one God and Father of all, and one great family on earth.

2. *Serve the* LORD *with gladness.* That is, In your worship, and in all your acts of obedience. Let there be joy in this service. Let it not be with the fear of slaves; not as a matter of compulsion and force; not with reluctance, moroseness, or gloom. Let it be a cheerful, happy service; let it be freely rendered, let it be an occasion of joy to the soul. The service of God is a source of the highest joy that man knows. ¶ *Come before his presence with singing* As expressive

ness; come before his presence with singing.

3 Know ye that the LORD, he *is* God: *it is* he [y] *that* hath made us, and [1] not we ourselves: *we are* his people, [z] and the sheep [a] of his pasture.

4 Enter [b] into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.

5 For the LORD *is* good, his

[y] Ps. cxlix. 2. [1] Or, *his we* are.
[z] Isa. lxiii. 19.
[a] Ez. xxxiv. 11, etc.; 1 Pet. ii. 25.
[b] Ps. lxv. 1; Isa. xxxv. 10.

of joy. So the birds sing; so nature rejoices; so should man,—intelligent, redeemed, immortal man, be joyful.

3. *Know ye that the* LORD, *he* is *God.* That is, Let all the nations know that *Jehovah* is the true God. The idols are vanity. They have no claim to worship; but God is the Creator of all, and is entitled to universal adoration. ¶ It is *he* that *hath made us.* The Hebrew is, "He made us," and this expresses the exact idea. The fact that he is the Creator proves that he is God, since no one but God can perform the work of creation. The highest idea that we can form of power is that which is evinced in an act of creation; that is, in causing anything to exist where there was nothing before. Every created thing, therefore, is a proof of the existence of God; the immensity of the universe is an illustration of the greatness of his power. ¶ *And not we ourselves.* Marg., *And his we* are. The difference between the text and the margin is owing to a different reading in the Hebrew, varying only in a single letter. The reading in the text is, "And not (לֹא) we;" in the margin, "And to him (לוֹ) we." These words would be pronounced in the same manner, and either of them would convey good sense. The weight of authority is in favour of the common reading, — "And not we;" that is, We are not self-created; we derive our being from him. All that we have and are, we owe to him. ¶ We are *his people.* By virtue of creation. The highest *property* which can exist is that derived from an act of creation. He that has brought anything into existence has a right to it, and may dispose of it as he pleases. It is on this idea essentially that *all* idea of *property* is founded. ¶ *And the sheep of his pasture.* As the shepherd owns the flock, so God is our owner; as the shepherd guards his flock and provides for it, so God guards us and provides for us. See Notes on Ps. xcv. 7.

4. *Enter into his gates,* etc. The gates which lead to his temple, or to the place of public worship. ¶ *Into his courts,* etc. The *courts* were literally the open spaces which surrounded the tabernacle or temple. It was in these that worship was celebrated, and not *in* the tabernacle or temple. See Notes on Ps. lxv. 4; lxxxiv. 2; xcii. 13. ¶ *Be thankful unto him.* That is, Offer thanksgiving and praise. Come before him with a grateful heart. See Notes on Ps. l. 14. ¶ *Bless his name.* Bless him; praise him; ascribe honour to him; acknowledge him as God.

5. *For the* LORD is *good.* For good is Jehovah. That is, He is not a being of mere *power;* he is not *merely* the Creator; but he is benevolent, and is, therefore, worthy of universal praise. In the former verses, his claim to adoration is founded on the fact that he is the *Creator,* and has, as such, a right to our service; in this verse, the claim is asserted on account of his moral character: (1) his benevolence; (2) his mercy; (3) his truth;—(*a*) the fact that he is a God of truth; and (*b*) the fact that his truth endures, or that in all generations he shows himself to be faithful to his promises. The first of these is his *benevolence:* "The Lord is *good.*" As such, assuredly, God is worthy of praise and honour. A

mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to [1] all generations.

[1] *generation and generation*, Ps. lxxxix. 1.

being of mere *power* we could not love or praise; a being whose power was united with malignity or malevolence, could only be the object of hatred and terror; but a being whose power is united with goodness or benevolence *ought* to be loved. ¶ *His mercy* is *everlasting*. This is the *second* reason, drawn from his moral character, why he should be praised and adored. A being of mere *justice* may be feared and respected; but a character of *mere* justice would be to man an object of dread,—and may be so anywhere. There are other attributes than the one of *justice*, high and valuable as that may be, which are necessary to constitute a perfect character; and man, in order to find happiness and security, must find some other attribute in God than mere *justice*,—for man is a sinner, and needs pardon; he is a sufferer, and needs compassion; he is to die, and needs support and consolation. Besides, mere *justice* may drive its decisions over some of the kindest and tenderest feelings of human nature; for there *are* cases, under all administrations, where pardon is desirable and mercy is proper. It is, therefore, a ground of unspeakable joy for man that God is not a Being of *mere justice*, but that there is mingled in his character the attribute of mercy and kindness. But for this, man could have no hope; for, as a sinner, he has no claim on God, and all his hope *must* be derived from God's infinite compassion. To all this as a ground of praise is to be added the fact that this mercy of God is "*everlasting*." Its fruits—its results—will extend to the vast eternity before us; and in all that eternity we shall never cease to enjoy the benefits of that mercy; never be suffered to fall back on the mere *justice* of God. ¶ *And his truth* endureth *to all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *to generation and generation.* That is, for ever. It is the same in every generation of the world. This is the *third* reason derived from the moral character of God for praising him; and this is a just ground of praise. We could not love and honour a God who was not true to his promises, and who did not himself love the truth; we could not honour one who was changeable and flexible—who loved one thing in one generation and a different thing in the next; who in one age was the friend of truth, and in the next the patron of falsehood. It is the just foundation for praise to God—our God—that he is essentially and always—in all worlds, and in all the generations of men—towards all in the universe—a Being of unchangeable benevolence, mercy, and truth. Such a God is worthy to be had in universal reverence; such a God is worthy of universal praise.

PSALM CI.

This psalm purports to be a Psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him, though it is not possible to ascertain why it did not have a place in the collection of his psalms in the early part of the book (Ps. i.-lxxii.). There are several such, however, scattered through the latter part of the Book of Psalms, leading us to suppose that this which may have been an early collection or *edition* of his psalms, became known *as* the Psalms of David, and that miscellaneous psalms—and among them not a few of his composition—perhaps later psalms—were subsequently *added* to the volume.

The time when it was composed cannot be ascertained with any certainty or probability. It would *seem* to have been written when he was entering on domestic life, as the psalm consists of *rules* which he appears to have laid down for himself as the head of a family, or as indicating the course which he purposed to pursue in the management of his household. As such, the psalm has a universal application, and may be useful in all times and in all places. Few questions are more important than those

PSALM CI.

A Psalm of David.

I WILL sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

2 I will behave [c] myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt

[c] 1 Sam. xviii. 14.

which occur to one entering on married life, in regard to his own conduct as the head of a family, to the principles which he shall maintain in his own dwelling, and to the rules by which he shall govern his own conduct. For one in such circumstances it is an inestimable advantage to have an inspired composition like this, indicating what is proper, and suggesting the rules which should guide one in such circumstances.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. The introduction—the purpose to praise God with respect to "mercy and judgment;" that is, to make these the theme of his song, ver. 1.

II. His purpose to lead an upright life—a life characterised by wisdom—especially in his own family, vers. 2, 3. It is a purpose to *begin* life in this relation aright; *to be* an upright man in his family.

III. The *principles* on which he purposed to do this, especially in reference to those who should be in his employ as domestics, servants, or labourers, vers. 4–7:—

(1) He would employ no "froward" person, ver. 4.
(2) He would employ no one who was a "slanderer," ver. 5.
(3) He would employ no one who had "a high look or a proud heart," ver. 5.
(4) He would seek out the faithful and the pious in the land to be in his service, ver. 6.
(5) He would employ no one who was deceitful; no one who could not be trusted; no one who was a liar, ver. 7.

IV. These same principles, he says, should govern him in a higher relation—as a sovereign and monarch; for they were principles which were as needful in administering the government of a nation, as in a family; they were principles which a good man *should* take with him to all the public duties of life, whatever might be his rank, ver. 8.

Thus understood, the psalm contains important principles applicable (*a*) to man or woman entering on the married life; (*b*) to those who are at the head of manufacturing establishments; (*c*) to farmers and mechanics; (*d*) to those who occupy official positions, and who administer the government of a land,—judges, rulers, princes, monarchs. No better rules could be given to guide those who have others under them or in their employ, in respect to their own conduct, or in respect to those who shall be employed, than such as the psalmist here says should guide him.

1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment.* That is, In the psalm which he was about to compose, he would make these the burden of his song; he would, in fact, by stating his views as to the regulation of his own conduct, commend these virtues—mercy and justice—to mankind, and celebrate their value. He who himself *adopts* the principles of mercy, kindness, truth, and justice, as his own guide, commends these virtues to mankind in the best way possible. No *language* can do it effectually, unless a man practises these virtues himself. ¶ *Unto thee, O* LORD, *will I sing.* As commending and approving these things; as having put it into my heart to practise them; as displaying them in thine own higher administration:—for a father of a family, or a magistrate, is but the representative of God.

2. *I will behave myself wisely.* In the choice of principles to guide me; in my conduct in my family; in my official relations. This expresses a *desire* to act wisely, and a *purpose* to do it. ¶ *In a perfect way.* In accordance with the perfect rules of right. I will make these my guide. I will *aim* to be perfect; I will have before me a perfect standard. ¶ *O when wilt thou come unto me?* Perhaps this would be better rendered, "When thou dost come unto me;" that is, When thou dost visit me and my dwelling, thou shalt find that these

thou come unto me? I will walk *d* within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will *e* set no [1] wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them *f* that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know *g* a wicked *person*.

d 1 Kings ix. 4. *e* Isa. xxxiii. 15. [1] *thing of Belial.* *f* Ps. cxxv. 5. *g* 1 Cor. xv. 33.

are the principles which regulate and govern me in my house. The idea is that God would come to visit his habitation, and inspect his conduct; and that whenever this should occur, however often it might be, or however unexpectedly he might come, he should *always* find these principles governing him in his family. A man should so live that *whenever* God comes into his dwelling, or when any one comes, or however narrow and searching may be the inspection, these principles shall be found to regulate his conduct. ¶ *I will walk within my house.* Before my family; in the principles which shall govern me there. ¶ *With a perfect heart.* Always aiming to do exactly that which is right:—in my general conduct; in the rules by which I live; in my treatment of all under my charge and in my employ. The great principles of *right*, in everything—in the smallest matters—shall guide and govern me.

3. *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.* That is, I will propose no wicked thing to be done; I will have no such object in view; I will employ no one to do that which is wrong. The marg., as the Heb., is, *thing of Belial.* See Notes on Ps. xli. 8. It here means that which is worthless, bad, wicked. He would have no wicked aim; he would not look upon a wicked thing for a moment, or with the least favour. ¶ *I hate the work of them that turn aside.* All their doings, motives, plans. The word rendered *turn aside* means to turn out of the way; out of the right path: Wanderers — transgressors — those who leave the path of truth and honesty. ¶ It *shall not cleave to me.* I will have nothing to do with it. It shall not be allowed to attach itself to me. A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "*stick to him*"—as pitch, or wax, or a *burn* does.

4. *A froward heart shall depart from me.* The word here rendered *froward* means perverse, false, deceitful, depraved. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 26. The *idea* here is that of one who is inclined to evil; who has some wrong passion or inclination to indulge; who has an obstinate and perverse will; who does not listen to reason or the voice of wise persuasion; who *will* do wrong, despite all the means which may be employed to induce him to do right. The language may either refer to the author of the psalm himself, as regulating his own conduct; or it may refer to those in his employ. In the former sense, it would mean that he would not himself be perverse and froward; in the latter sense, that he would not *have* such persons in his employ. The connexion seems to require that we should understand it in the latter sense, as referring to the class of persons that the psalmist would have about him. ¶ *I will not know a wicked* person. I will not countenance such a one; I will not recognize such a one among those who are admitted into my house, or own him as my friend; or, I will not have such in my employ. Probably the language embraces both these ideas,—as it should in the case of all who are at the head of a family:—(*a*) I will not countenance or recognize as among my friends, who are to be admitted to my fireside and family, and who are to be familiar with me and my children, those who are profligate, wicked, and unprincipled, whatever may be

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh [1] in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

[1] Or, *perfect in the way*, Ps. cxix. 1.

their rank, their wealth, their accomplishments, their fascination of manner, or their power of conversation; (*b*) I will have in my employ no one who is not honest, temperate, virtuous, pure. The welfare of a family depends more on the former of these things than the latter; no family can be well ordered where both are not found.

5. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour.* Literally, "One who speaks concerning his neighbour in secret." If a man has any good to say of another, he will be likely to say it openly; if he has any evil to say, it will be likely to be said in secret. Hence to speak in secret of any one comes to mean the same thing as to slander him. ¶ *Him will I cut off.* That is, I will cut him off from me; I will not employ him. He would not have one in his house, or in his service, who did injustice to the character of others; who stabbed their reputation in the dark. This was alike indicative of the personal character of the author of the psalm, and of his purpose as the head of a family. It is hardly necessary to say that no one *should* employ another who is in the habit of slandering his neighbour. ¶ *Him that hath an high look.* That is proud,—as a proud man commonly carries his head high. ¶ *And a proud heart.* The Hebrew word here rendered *proud* commonly means wide, broad, large, as of the sea, or of an extended country, Job xi. 9; Ex. iii. 8. It is applied also to the law of God as comprehensive, and without limit, Ps. cxix. 96. Then it comes to mean swelled up —*made* large — inflated (Prov. xxviii. 25); and hence, proud and arrogant. ¶ *Will not I suffer.* I will not tolerate such a person near me. No one can have peace in his house who has such a class of servants or domestics; no one should countenance such persons. Humility is the very foundation of all virtue.

6. *Mine eyes* shall be *upon the faithful of the land,* etc. I will look to them to be employed in my house, and in my service. The word rendered *faithful* means those who are worthy of belief or confidence. It does not *necessarily* mean those who are pious or religious—though it is often used to denote such persons, in reference to the principal trait in the character of the pious, *i. e.* confidence or faith in God. The essential meaning here is, that he would seek those who were trustworthy; on whom he could place reliance; whose truth, fidelity, and honesty he could confide in. This would be most certainly found in those who are "faithful" to God, and who would then be "faithful" to lower obligations. Undoubtedly, also, it is desirable, on some accounts, to have only such in our employ, if such can be found. But we are not to regard this passage as teaching the doctrine, even by the example of the psalmist, that we are to employ no persons but such as are truly religious. There are others who will be found faithful, honest, and reliable; and they have such a claim to our confidence as to impose on us a moral obligation to show them that confidence,—so far, at least, that we shall not, by any act of ours, declare them *not* worthy of trust *because* they are not religious. Besides, it may be desirable, on many accounts, that persons who are not religious should be brought under the influence of religion in pious families, and enjoy the advantages which may be connected with a religious household. In seeking our own interest, and what will be for our own welfare and happiness, we should not be unmindful of what may be for the good of

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies [h] shall not [1] tarry in my sight.

[h] Rev. xxi. 27. [1] *be established.*

8 I [i] will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

[i] Jer. xxi. 12.

others. Religion may extend itself much in the world by thus bringing into the service of religious households those who *may*, by example, instruction, and prayer, be led to the possession and practice of true religion. ¶ *He that walketh in a perfect way*, etc. Marg., *perfect in the way*. The translation in the text is the more correct. The phrase means an upright man; a man of integrity. It does not necessarily imply that he is absolutely holy, or free from all sin, but that he is upright, consistent, honest: a man whose moral character is developed in proper proportions, or is such that it may be relied on. See Notes on Job i. 1.

7. *He that worketh deceit.* The man who is dishonest,—who is full of tricks, false pretences, and devices,—who cannot be confided in as straightforward and sincere,—one whose word cannot be relied on,—one whose course is subterranean or serpentine. ¶ *Shall not dwell within my house.* Shall neither be employed in my service, nor be admitted as a guest and companion. I will not, in any way, patronise or countenance such a person. ¶ *He that telleth lies.* In any way:—by stating what is false; by promising what is not performed; by deceiving me in his professions. I will seek only those who love and speak the truth. ¶ *Shall not tarry in my sight.* Marg., *shall not be established.* The idea is that of being confirmed or established. The sense here seems to be, that though such a person *should* gain admittance to his house on any pretence or profession, he should not obtain a permanent residence there. As soon as his real character was known, he would be dismissed or discharged. The psalmist says that he would do nothing to show him countenance; he would not give occasion to have it represented that he favoured liars or dishonest persons, or that such persons might find employment with him. As a universal rule, no man should have such plans to accomplish in his family, or in his business-transactions, that he cannot employ, in accomplishing those things, persons who are perfectly honest; or, in other words, no man should engage in any undertaking, or pursue any kind of business, that would require men of loose principles—the cunning, the crafty, the deceitful, the dishonest—to carry it out. Yet there *are* many such employments in the world; and there *are* men fitted for such employments, and who are willing to engage in such work. It may be a good test for a man in regard to the business in which he is engaged, to ask himself what kind of agents, clerks, or servants, it will be necessary for him to employ in carrying it out. If the business is such as to make it necessary to employ unprincipled men — men who have easy consciences—men who will violate the sabbath—men who have more skill than honesty—more cunning than principle—that very fact should determine him at once in regard to the propriety of the business.

8. *I will early destroy*, etc. Heb., "In the mornings I will destroy." That is, It shall be my first business as I enter upon the day. Possibly, also, by the use of the plural here—"in the *mornings*"—there may be the idea that this would be his constant rule of conduct:—he would do it every day; he would do it morning by morning. He would on no day—at no time—allow the wicked to be in his service. This rule would be unvarying. It would extend through his life. The word *destroy* here may refer not only to his conduct as a man,

and as the head of a family, but to the act of a magistrate; and the idea may be, that the rule which he prescribed for himself in his own house was a rule which he would carry with him into public:—that is, as the psalm was composed by David, that, as a king and sovereign, it should be his aim to carry those principles to the throne; that, in respect to the state, he would do what he purposed to do in his home-relations. The strict and stern regard for truth, sincerity, honesty, fidelity, which he would evince in the one case he would evince in the other; carrying to the high employments of public life, where there were so many temptations to a contrary course, the inflexible virtues which were needful for peace, for happiness, and for success in domestic life. ¶ *That I may cut off.* By discountenancing them; by punishing them if they are guilty. ¶ *All wicked doers.* All violators of law. ¶ *From the city of the* LORD. From Jerusalem, the place where God dwelt, and which was sacred to his service. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 4; xlviii. 2, 8. Happy is the man at the head of a family—happy is the magistrate—who adopts for himself, and who faithfully carries out the principles laid down by the author of this psalm—divinely inspired to adopt such rules for himself, and to suggest them for others in all ages.

PSALM CII.

This psalm purports, in the title, to be a "Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It *is* a prayer, made up of earnest supplications, as of one who was in great affliction, whether he refers to his own individual sorrows, or whether he speaks as one of the people. The word "afflicted," means here a suffering one; one who is in trouble. The word is in the singular number, and is one which is often applied to a person who is in trouble—whatever may be the nature of that trouble. The word rendered *overwhelmed* means properly to cover as with a garment; to clothe; and then, to be covered with darkness, affliction, grief, Ps. lxi. 2. This is the meaning here. It denotes a state where the soul was enshrouded in gloom and sorrow. The word rendered *complaint*, means properly meditation; then, moaning; then, the expression of sorrow. It does not necessarily mean, as the word does with us, *finding fault*, or expressing dissatisfaction, but it rather denotes that deep sorrow which finds utterance in low and plaintive sounds;—not in boisterous and loud outcry, but in subdued notes,—in sounds uttered not because one wishes to complain, but because the sorrow is such that it will find vent. Comp. 1 Sam. i. 16; 1 Kings xviii. 27; Job vii. 13; ix. 27; x. 1; xxi. 4; Ps. lv. 2; lxiv. 1 (*Heb.*).

On what occasion, or by whom, this psalm was composed, it is not possible now to ascertain. Hengstenberg and Prof. Alexander suppose that it was by David. It seems more probable, however, from vers. 13-21, that it was in the time of the captivity, and was in view of the troubles of that long and weary exile, and that the psalmist speaks not of individual and personal troubles, but speaks as one of the people—as one in exile with others who had been long held in captivity, and who sighed for deliverance, and for a restoration to their native land. In the midst of these troubles, which are so tenderly described in the first eleven verses, he saw encouraging evidences that the Lord was about to manifest his mercy, and to restore the people to their native land; and he pleads most earnestly with God, on the ground that he was faithful and unchanging, that he *would* thus interpose and accomplish the earnest desire of his afflicted people. The *language*, indeed, in the psalm, is that of an individual, and the author of the psalm speaks of his own personal sorrows, but it may be as one among many who were equally crushed and overwhelmed, so that the language used to represent his sorrow may describe the sorrows experienced by others in the same circumstances. Beyond all question, the language used in the psalm would express the feelings of many a pious Hebrew in the time of the exile,—the sorrow—the sadness—the cherished hopes—the prayers—of many a one in that prolonged and painful captivity.

The psalm may be divided into three parts:—

I. A description of the sorrows of the

PSALM CII.

A Prayer [1] of the afflicted, when *k* he is overwhelmed, and poureth *l* out his complaint before the LORD.

HEAR [m] my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

2 Hide [n] not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call, answer me speedily.

3 For my days are consumed [2] like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.

[1] Or, *for.* *k* Ps. lxi. 2. *l* Ps. lxii. 8. *m* Ps. cxiv. 19. *n* Isa. xliii. 2; 1 Cor. x. 13.

[2] Or, (as some read) *into.*

author of the psalm, as representative of the condition and feelings of the exiles, vers. 1-11. In this, the language of lamentation and complaint predominates.

II. The grounds of hope—the indications of deliverance—the evidences that God was about to show favour to his people, and to restore them to their own country,—that the time, the set time, to favour Zion was about to come, vers. 12-22.

III. The confidence of the psalmist in God, on the ground of his unchangeableness:—on the fact that God is always the same; that his promises must be sure; that his purposes must be accomplished; that the very heavens and the earth would change,—that the skies would grow old like a garment and pass away,—but that God did not, would not change. All that he had spoken must be true; all that he had purposed must be accomplished; all that he had promised must come to pass, vers. 23-28.

1. *Hear my prayer, O* LORD. The prayer which I offer in view of my personal trials; the prayer which I offer as one of an afflicted people. Comp. Ps. iv. 1; xvii. 1; xviii. 6. ¶ *And let my cry come unto thee.* My prayer, accompanied with an outward expression of my earnestness. It was not a silent, or a mental prayer; it was a loud and earnest cry. Ps. v. 2; xviii. 6, 41; xxx. 2; lxxii. 12; Job xxxv. 9; xxxvi. 13.

2. *Hide not thy face from me.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Do not turn away thy face from me." The sense is essentially the same. The prayer is, that God would not refuse to look graciously upon him; that he would turn his attention to him; that he would regard his supplications. See Notes on Ps. x. 1; comp. Ps. xiii. 1; xxvii. 9; Job xiii. 24; xxxiv. 29; Deut. xxxi. 17. ¶ *In the day* when *I am in trouble.* When sorrows come upon me; when I need thy gracious help. Literally, "When there is distress to me." ¶ *Incline thine ear unto me.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1; xvii. 6; comp. Ps. xvii. 1; lv. 1; lxxxvi. 6; xxxix. 12. ¶ *In the day* when *I call, answer me speedily.* Grant at once my requests; give me immediate evidence that my prayer is heard. The psalmist believed in an immediate answer to prayer. He often had evidence that his prayer was answered at once; his mind became calm; he had comfort and peace; he obtained the blessing which he earnestly sought. No one can doubt that prayer *may* be answered at once; no one who prays can fail to find such answers in his own case, in his peace, his calmness, his joy. In multitudes of cases blessings are granted in such a way that there can be no doubt that they have come in answer to prayer. Comp. Notes on Dan. ix. 20—23.

3. *For my days are consumed like smoke.* Marg., *into smoke.* Literally, *in smoke.* That is, They vanish as smoke; they pass away and become nothing; they are spent in affliction, and seem to accomplish nothing. The idea is, that in his affliction he seemed to accomplish none of the ends of life. His life seemed to be wasted. This is often the feeling in trial:—and yet *in* trial a man may be more useful, he may do more to accomplish the real ends of life, he may do more to illustrate the power and excellence of religion, than he ever did in the days of prosperity. ¶ *And my*

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my [1] skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert.

[1] Or, *flesh.*

bones are burned as an hearth. Or rather, as faggots or fuel. Literally, "They are burned as a burning." here. It is that of such a complete absorption in trouble that everything else is forgotten.



PELICAN.

The idea is, that in his troubles, his very bones, the most solid and substantial part of himself, seemed to be consumed and to waste away. See Notes on Ps. xxxi. 10.

4. *My heart is smitten.* Broken; crushed with grief. We now speak of *a broken heart.* Even death is often caused by such excessive sorrow as to crush and break the heart. ¶ *And withered like grass.* It is dried up as grass is by drought, or as when it is cut down. It loses its support; and having no strength of its own, it dies. ¶ *So that I forget to eat my bread.* I am so absorbed in my trials; they so entirely engross my attention, that I think of nothing else, not even of those things which are necessary to the support of life. Grief has the effect of taking away the appetite, but this does not seem to be the idea

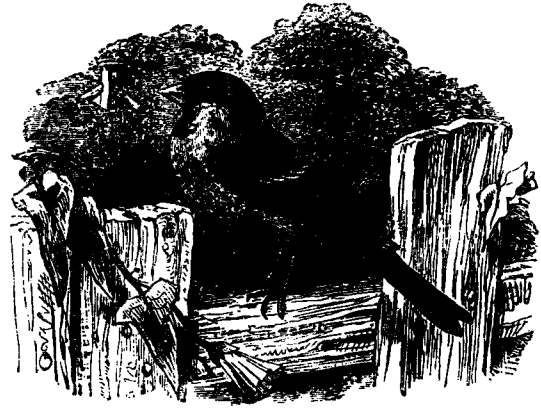
5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning.* By suffering and trouble, so great as to produce groaning, my flesh is wasted away. ¶ *My bones cleave to my skin.* Marg., *flesh.* The Hebrew word means *flesh.* The effect described is that of a wasting away or an emaciation of flesh from deep distress, so that the bones became prominent, and had nothing to hide them from view; so that they seemed to adhere fast to the flesh itself. See Notes on Job xix. 20.

6. *I am like a pelican of the wilderness.* A bird in the midst of desolation becomes a striking image of loneliness and distress. The word rendered *pelican* — קָאַת, *kaath* — is supposed to have been a name given to the pelican from the idea of *vomiting,* as it "vomits the shells and other substances which it has too voraciously

7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.
8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn *o* against me.

o Acts xxiii. 12.

swallowed." The word occurs in the following places, where it is rendered as here *pelican:* Lev. xi. 18; Deut. xiv. 17; and in Isa. xxxiv. 11; Zeph. ii. 14, where it is rendered *cormorant.* The following description, taken from the "Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 403, by Dr. Thomson, will illustrate this passage. Speaking of the outlet of the Hûleh, and the region of the exit of the Jordan from that lake in its course toward the sea of Tiberias, he says, "Here only have I seen the pelican of the wilderness, as David calls it. I once had one of them shot just below this place, and, as it was merely wounded in the wing, I had a good opportunity to study its character. It was certainly the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. David could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state. It seemed as large as a half-grown donkey, and when fairly settled on its stout legs, it looked like one. The pelican is never seen but in these unfrequented solitudes, and to this agree all the references to it in the Bible." ¶ *I am like an owl of the desert.* The owl is a well-known bird which dwells in solitudes and old ruins, and which becomes, alike by its seeking such places of abode, by its appearance, and by its doleful cry, the very emblem of desolation.



SPARROW.

7. *I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.* That is, I am *sleepless;* trouble drives sleep from my eyes, and I am kept awake at night —a common effect of grief. The following remarks, copied from the "Land and the Book" (i. 54, 55), will furnish all the illustration needful of this verse. "They are a tame, troublesome, and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you don't want them. They stop up your stove and water-pipes with their rubbish, build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble in half a day if they found it hanging in a place to suit them. . . . When one of them has lost its mate—a matter of every-day occurrence—he will sit on the house-top alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement."

8. *Mine enemies reproach me all the day.* Continually. They reproach me as one of thy people; or, I bear reproaches in common with others, and it becomes to me a personal matter, so entirely are my feelings and interests identified with those of thy people. Perhaps there were also, mingled with this, personal reproaches and calumnies. ¶ And *they that are mad against me.* Angry; excited even to madness. ¶ *Are sworn against me.* Literally, "swear by me," or against me. The meaning is, that they have conspired together under the solemnity of an oath to do me

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping;

10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for [p] thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

[p] Ps. xxx. 7. [q] Eccles. vi. 12.

11 My days *are* like a shadow [q] that declineth; and I am withered [r] like grass.

12 But thou, [s] O LORD, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations.

[r] James i. 10. [s] Lam. v. 19.

harm. It is not the wrath of an individual that I am to meet, but the combined wrath of those who act under the solemnities of an oath. Comp. Acts xxiii. 12.

9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread.* I have seated myself in ashes in my grief (comp. Job ii. 8; xlii. 6; Isa. lviii. 5; lxi. 3; Jonah iii. 6; Dan. ix. 3; Matt. xi. 21); and ashes have become, as it were, my food. The ashes in which he sat had been mingled with his food. ¶ *And mingled my drink with weeping.* Tears have fallen into the cup from which I drank, and have become a part of my drink. The idea is, that he had shed copious tears; and that even when he took his food, there was no respite to his grief.

10. *Because of thine indignation and thy wrath.* Heb., "From the face of thine indignation," etc. That is,—he regarded all his sufferings as proof of the indignation and wrath of God against him. See Ps. xc. 7–9. ¶ *For thou hast lifted me up.* In former times. Thou hadst given me prosperity; thou hadst given me an elevated and honourable place among men. ¶ *And cast me down.* Thou hast brought me into a low condition, and I feel it all the more from the fact that I had enjoyed prosperity. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxx. 7. The passage, however, is susceptible of another interpretation: "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me away." That is, Thou hast lifted me from the ground as a storm or tempest takes up a light thing, and hast whirled me away. This idea occurs in Isa. xxii. 18. See Notes on that passage. The former, however, seems to me to be the more correct interpretation.

11. *My days* are *like a shadow that declineth.* The shadow made by the gnomon on a sun-dial, which marks the hours as they pass. See 2 Kings xx. 10. The idea is that the shadow made by the descending sun was about to disappear altogether. It had become less distinct and clear, and it would soon vanish. It would seem from this, that the dial was so made that the shadow indicating the hour ascended when the sun ascended, and declined when the sun went down. See Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 8. ¶ *And I am withered like grass.* See Notes on ver. 4.

12. *But thou, O* LORD, *shalt endure for ever.* Though my condition has been changed, though I have been cast down from an exalted position, though kingdoms rise and fall, yet thou art unchanged. Thy purposes will abide. Thy promises will be fulfilled. Thy character is the same. As thou hast been the hearer of prayer in past times, so thou art now. As thou hast interposed in behalf of thy people in other ages, so thou wilt now. As thy people in affliction have been permitted to come to thee, so they may come to thee now. The psalmist here brings to his own mind, as an encouragement in trouble, as we may at all times, the fact that God is an unchanging God; that he always lives; that he is ever the same. We could have no ground of hope if God changed; if he formed purposes only to abandon them; if he made promises only to disregard them; if to-day he were a Being of mercy and goodness, and to-morrow would be merely a Being of justice and wrath. This argument is enlarged upon in vers. 25–28.

13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time
t Isa. lx. 1, etc.; Zec. i. 12, 13. *u* Isa. xl. 2.

t to favour her, yea, the set *u* time, is come.

14 For thy servants take plea-

¶ *And thy remembrance unto all generations.* Thy memory; or, the remembrance of thee. *My* days are like a shadow. I shall pass away, and be forgotten. No one will recollect me; no one will feel any interest in remembering that I have ever lived (see Notes on Ps. xxxi. 12). But while one knows that this must be so in regard to himself and to all other men—that he and they are alike to be forgotten—he may also feel that there is One who will *never* be forgotten. God will never pass away. He will be always the same. All the hopes of the church—of the world—are based on this. It is not on man—on any one man—on any number of men—for they will all alike pass away and be forgotten; but one generation of men after another, to the end of time, may call on God, and find him an ever-living, an unchanged and unchangeable protector and friend.

13. *Thou shalt arise.* Thou wilt come forth—as if God had been inattentive or inactive. ¶ And *have mercy upon Zion.* That is, Upon Jerusalem—represented as in a state of desolation. God would at length pity her, and interpose in her behalf. ¶ *For the time to favour her.* Implying that there was an appointed time to favour her, or to bring her troubles to an end. ¶ *Yea, the set time is come.* The word here used—מוֹעֵד, *moaid*—means properly an appointed season—a designated moment. It refers to some purpose or appointment in regard to anything that is to be done, as in 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 11; 2 Sam. xx. 5; Gen. xvii. 21; or to a fixed period, as when certain things are to be done, certain festivals to be held regularly at a certain season of the year, Lam. i. 4; ii. 6; Hos. ix. 5; xii. 9; Lev. xxiii. 2, 4, 37, 44. Here it means that there was some period fixed in the Divine Mind when this was to occur, or a definite time when it had been predicted or promised that it would occur. The language is such as would be applicable to the captivity in Babylon, concerning which there was a promise that it should continue but seventy years. If the psalm refers to that, then the meaning is that there were indications in the course of events that that period was about to arrive. Comp. Notes on Dan. ix. 2. What those indications were in this case, the psalmist immediately states, ver. 14. It may be remarked here, that there are usually some previous intimations or indications of what God is about to do. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Even the Divine purposes are accomplished usually in connexion with human agency, and in the regular course of events; and it is frequently possible to anticipate that God is about to appear for the fulfilment of his promises. So it was in the coming of the Saviour. So it was in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. So it is when God is about to revive religion in a church. So it is, and will be, in regard to the conversion of the world.

14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones.* Those who profess to be thy servants; thy friends. This was the *evidence* to the mind of the psalmist that God was about to visit his people, and to rebuild Jerusalem. It was an *awakened interest* among the professed people of God, leading them to manifest their love for Zion, and for all that pertained to her,—a love for the very stones that lay in undistinguished heaps where the city once stood,—the piles of rubbish where the walls and dwellings had once been. The people of God in their captivity began to look with strong interest on these very ruins, and with an earnest wish that from

sure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

these ruins the city may again arise, and the walls be rebuilt. ¶ *And favour the dust thereof.* Literally, *pity*—or, show compassion for. They no longer look with indifference on these ruins of Zion. They look with a tender heart on the very dust of those ruins. They feel that a wrong has been done to Zion; they ardently desire its restoration to its former splendour and glory. They long for a return to it as to their home. They are weary with their captivity, and they are anxiously waiting for the time when they may revisit their native land. This would seem to refer to an awakened interest on the subject, caused perhaps in part by the fact that it could be ascertained (see Dan. ix. 2) that the period of the captivity *was* about to end, and partly by an influence on their hearts from on high, awakening in them a deeper love for Zion—a revival of pure religion. The practical truth taught here is, that an indication of a coming revival of religion is often manifested by the increased attention to the subject among its professed friends; by the desire in their hearts that it may be so; by tenderness, pity, compassion among them in view of abounding desolations, the coldness of the church, and the prevalence of iniquity; by their looking with interest on that which had before been neglected, like shapeless ruins — the prayer-meeting, the communion, the sanctuary; by a conscious returning love in their hearts for all that pertains to religion, however unimportant it may be in the eyes of the world, or however it may be despised. A surrounding world would look with unconcern on the ruins of Jerusalem; a friend of God, in whose heart religion was revived, would look with the most tender concern even on that rubbish, and those ruins. So it is in a revival of religion, when God is about to visit his church in mercy. Everything in regard to the church becomes an object of deep interest.

15. *So the heathen.* The nations. That is, The surrounding people, who hear what thou hast done for thy people, will see the evidence that thou art God, and learn to love and worship thee. ¶ *Shall fear the name of the* LORD. Shall reverence and honour thee. ¶ *And all the kings of the earth thy glory.* The sovereigns of the earth will be especially affected and impressed with thy majesty. If this refers to the return from the captivity at Babylon, then it means that that event would be particularly fitted to impress the minds of the rulers of the world, as showing that God had all nations under his control; that he could deliver a captive people from the grasp of the mighty; that he was the friend of those who worshipped him, and that he would frown on oppression and wrong.

16. *When the* LORD *shall build up Zion.* The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther, render this, "Because the Lord hath built up Zion." This also is the most natural and correct translation of the Hebrew. The reference, however, may be to the future. The psalmist may throw himself into the future, and—standing there — he may describe things as they will appear then,—as already done. ¶ *He shall appear in his glory.* The idea is that the building up of Zion would be an occasion in which God would manifest his glory. In reference to the restoration of his people from bondage; in rebuilding Zion, then in ruins; in restoring the splendour of the place where he had been so long worshipped, he would display his true character as a God of glory, truth, power, and goodness. As applied to the

17 He [v] will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

18 This [w] shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

19 For he hath looked down

[v] Neh. i. 6, 11; ii. 1—8.

[w] Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 11.

church in general, this would mean that when God comes to revive religion, to visit his people, to recover them from their backslidings, to convert and save sinners, he appears in his appropriate character *as* the God of his people,—*as* a glorious God. Then the perfections of his nature are most illustriously displayed; then he appears in his true character, as a God of mercy, grace, and salvation. There is no scene on earth where the character of God is more gloriously exhibited than in a revival of true religion.

17. *He will regard the prayer.* Literally, "He looks upon," or "he *turns himself* to their prayer." He does not any longer seem to turn away from them and disregard them. He shows by thus building up Zion that he *does* regard prayer; that he hears the supplications of his people. There is no higher proof that prayer is heard than that which is often furnished in a revival of pure religion. All such revivals, like that on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1, *et seq.*), are usually preceded, as that was (Acts i. 13, 14), by special prayer; *in* those revivals there are often most manifest and clear answers to prayer for the conversion of individuals; to prayer for a blessing on a preached gospel; to prayer for particular relatives and friends. ¶ *Of the destitute.* Literally, *of the poor.* The word—עֲרָעָר, *arâr*—occurs only here and in Jer. xvii. 6, where it is rendered *heath:* "He shall be like the *heath* in the desert." The word, according to its etymology, means *naked;* then, poor, stripped of everything, impoverished, wholly destitute. It would thus be eminently applicable to the poor exiles in Babylon; it is *as* applicable to sinners pleading with God, and to the people of God themselves, destitute of everything like self-righteousness, and feeling that they have nothing in themselves, but that they are wholly dependent on the mercy of God. Comp. Rev. iii. 17. ¶ *And not despise their prayer.* Not treat it with contempt; not pass it by unheard. This is stated as one of the reasons why the nations would be struck with awe,—that God, the infinite God, would hear the prayers of those who were so poor, so powerless, so friendless. There is, in fact, nothing more fitted to excite wonder than that God *does* hear the prayer of poor, lost, sinful man.

18. *This shall be written for the generation to come.* It shall be recorded for the instruction and encouragement of future ages. The fact that God has heard the prayer of his people in a time of trial shall be so recorded and remembered that it may be referred to in similar circumstances in all time to come, for he is an unchanging God. What he has done now, he will always be willing to do hereafter. ¶ *And the people which shall be created.* Future generations. Each successive generation is in fact a new creation; each individual is also; for the essential idea in *creation* is that of bringing something into existence where there was nothing before. There is a *beginning* of existence in every human being. Man is not in any proper sense a *development* from former being, nor is his life merely a *continuance* of something which existed before. ¶ *Shall praise the* LORD. Shall praise the Lord for what he has now done; shall learn, from the great principles now illustrated in regard to his administration, to praise him.

19. *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary.* From his high and holy dwelling-place, in

from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

20 To [x] hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose [1] those that are appointed to death;

21 To [y] declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve the LORD.

23 He [2] weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

x Ps. cxlvi. 7.
1 *the children of death.*
y 1 Pet. ii. 9.
2 *afflicted.*

heaven. The word here rendered *looked down,* means, in Kal, to lay upon or over; then, in Niphil, to lie out over anything, to project; and then, to bend forward. It then means to bend or incline forward with an intention to look at anything, as from a window, Gen. xxvi. 8. Comp. Ps. xiv. 2. See also Notes on Ps. lxxxv. 12; 1 Pet. i. 12. ¶ *From heaven did the* LORD *behold the earth.* Did he look abroad over all the world.

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner.* Meaning here, probably, the captives in Babylon; those who were held as prisoners there, and who were subjected to such hardships in their long captivity. See Notes on Ps. lxxix. 11. ¶ *To loose those that are appointed to death.* Marg., as in Heb., *the children of death.* Comp. Notes on Matt. i. 1. This may mean either those who were sentenced to death; those who were sick and ready to die; or those who, in their captivity, were in such a state of privation and suffering that death appeared inevitable. The word rendered *loose* means, properly, to *open,*—applied to the mouth, for eating, Ezek. iii. 2; or in song, Ps. lxxviii. 2; or for speaking, Job iii. 1;—or the ear, Isa. l. 5;—or the hand, Deut. xv. 8;—or the gates of a city, a door, etc., Deut. xx. 11. Then it means to set free, as by opening the doors of a prison, Isa. xiv. 17; Job xii. 14. Here it means to *set free,* to *deliver.* Comp. Isa. lxi. 1.

21. *To declare the name of the* LORD *in Zion,* etc. That his name might be declared in Zion, or that his praise might be set up in Jerusalem again. That is, that his people might be returned there, and his praise be celebrated again in the holy city.

22. *When the people are gathered together.* When they shall be brought from their dispersion in distant lands; when they shall assemble again in the city of their fathers, and when public worship shall be celebrated there as in former ages. ¶ *And the kingdoms, to serve the* LORD. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, *kings.* The reference must be to the time when those of other lands—kings and their people—would be converted to the true religion; when the Gentiles as well as the Jews, then one undistinguished people, would be brought to the knowledge of the true God, and would unite in his worship. See Notes on Isa. lx. All, of all lands, will yet praise the Lord *as if* they were one great congregation, assembled in one place. Thus, though separate, they will with united feeling recount the mercy and goodness of God to his people in past times.

23. *He weakened my strength in the way.* Marg., as in Heb., *afflicted.* The idea is, that God had taken his strength away; he had weakened him,—humbled him,—brought him low by sorrow. The word *way* refers to the course which he was pursuing. In his journey of life God had thus afflicted—humbled—prostrated him. The psalmist here turns from the exulting view which he had of the future (vers. 21, 22), and resumes his complaint,—the remembrance of his troubles and sorrows (vers. 3–11). He speaks, doubtless, in the name of his people, and describes troubles which were common to them all. Perhaps the allusion to his troubles

24 I [z] said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations.

25 Of [a] old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.

26 They shall perish, but thou shalt [1] endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

27 But [b] thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.

28 The children of thy ser-

z Ps. xxxix. 13; Isa. xxxviii. 10.

a Heb. i. 10—12. 1 *stand.*
b Mal. iii. 6; Heb. xiii. 8.

here may be designed, as such a recollection should do, to heighten his sense of the goodness and mercy of God in the anticipated blessings of the future. ¶ *He shortened my days.* Comp. Job xxi. 21; Ps. lxxxix. 45. That is, He seemed to be about to cut me off from life, and to bring me to the grave. The psalmist felt so confident that he would die,—that he could not endure these troubles, but must sink under them, that he spoke as if it were already done. Comp. Ps. vi. 4, 5.

24. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.* This was the burden of my prayer; for this I earnestly pleaded. See Ps. xxx. 9; Isa. xxxviii. 1–3, 9–18. The word here used means *to cause to ascend* or *go up*, and the expression might have been translated, "Cause me not to ascend." The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render it, "Call me not away." Bishop Horsley, "Carry me not off." In the word there *may* be an allusion—an obscure one, it is to be admitted—to the idea that the soul *ascends* to God when the body dies. The common idea in the Old Testament is that it would *descend* to the regions of the departed spirits—to Sheol. It is plain, however, that there *was* another idea,—that the soul would *ascend* at once to God when death occurred. Comp. Eccl. iii. 21; xii. 7. The word rendered "in the midst" means properly *in the half*; as if life were divided into two portions. Comp. Ps. lv. 23. ¶ *Thy years* are *throughout all generations.* Thou dost not die; thou art ever the same, though the generations of men are cut off. This seems to have been said here for two reasons: (1) As a ground of consolation, that God was ever the same; that whatever might happen to men, to the psalmist himself, or to any other man, God was unchanged, and that his great plans would be carried forward and accomplished; (2) As a reason for the prayer. God was eternal. He had an immortal existence. He could not die. He knew, in its perfection, the blessedness of *life*—life as such; life continued; life unending. The psalmist appeals to what God himself enjoyed—as a reason why life—so great a blessing—should be granted to him a little longer. By all that there was of blessedness in the life of God, the psalmist prays that that which was in itself—even in the case of God—so valuable, might yet a little longer be continued to *him.*

25–27. *Of old.* See this passage fully explained in the Notes on Heb. i. 10–12. In the beginning; at the first. The phrase here used means literally *to the face*; then, *before* in the order of time. It means here, long ago; of olden time; at the beginning. The meaning is, that the years of God had stretched through all the generations of men, and all the changes which had occurred upon the earth; that at the very beginning he existed, and that he would continue to exist to the very close, unchangeably the same.

28. *The children of thy servants shall continue.* The descendants of those that serve and obey thee. This represents the confident expectation

vants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

of the psalmist that, as God was unchangeable, all his promises toward his people would be fulfilled, even though the heavens and the earth should pass away. God was the same. His word would not fail. His promises were sure. Comp. Matt. v. 18; xxiv. 35. The word rendered *continue*, means to dwell, as in a habitation; then, to abide. It stands opposed to a wandering, nomadic life, and indicates permanency. ¶ *And their seed shall be established before thee.* The word here used means properly to stand erect; then to set up, to erect, to place, to found, to make firm, as a city, Ps. cvii. 36; the earth, Ps. xxiv. 2; the heavens, Prov. iii. 19. It means here that they would be firmly and permanently established:—that is, the church of God would be permanent in the earth. It would not be like the generations of men that pass away. It would not be like the nomadic tribes of the desert that have no fixed habitation, and that wander from place to place. It would not be even like the heavens that might put on new forms, or wholly pass away:—it would be as enduring and changeless as God himself; it would, in its proper form, endure for ever. As God is eternal and unchangeable, so would the safety and welfare of his people be.

PSALM CIII.

This very beautiful psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David." Nothing in the psalm forbids the supposition that he was its author, although nothing in the psalm or elsewhere enables us to ascertain the precise occasion on which it was written.

It seems to have been composed after some signal manifestation of the mercy of God, or some striking proof of his compassion and loving-kindness; after some danger which threatened life, and was regarded as evidence of the Divine

PSALM CIII.

A Psalm of David.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul;

displeasure, but had now passed by; after God had interposed, and checked and arrested judgments which threatened ruin, and had manifested himself again as a loving Father. This merciful interposition filled the heart of the psalmist with emotions of gratitude and praise, and led him to call on his own soul (vers. 1, 2), and all the angels (ver. 20), and the hosts of heaven (ver. 21), and all the works of God everywhere (ver. 22) to unite in celebrating his praise. The psalm is exceedingly regular in its structure and composition; beautiful in its language and conceptions; adapted to all times and ages; fitted to express the feelings of gratitude to God for deliverance from trouble, and for the manifestation of his mercy; fitted to elevate the soul, and to fill it with cheerful views. These circumstances have made it a favourite psalm as a vehicle of praise in all ages. It is, moreover, eminently fitted to express the feelings of the soul in view of the redeeming love and mercy of God; the goodness of God in the forgiveness of sin through a Saviour; and his tender compassion for his people as a Father; and it is, therefore, one to which the Christian oftener turns than to almost any other of the psalms as expressive of the deep and grateful feelings of his heart.

1. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.* The word *bless*, as applied to God, means to praise, implying always a strong affection for him as well as a sense of gratitude. As used with reference to men, the word implies a *wish* that they may be blessed or happy, accompanied often with a *prayer* that they may be so. Such is the purport of the "blessing" addressed to a congregation of worshippers. Comp. Num. vi. 23-27. The word *soul* here is equivalent to mind or heart:—my mental and moral powers, as capable of understanding and appreciating his favours. The soul of man was *made* to praise and bless God; to enjoy his friendship; to delight in his favour; to contemplate his perfections. It can never

and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth *c* all thine iniquities; who healeth *d* all thy diseases;

c Matt. ix. 2—6; Eph. i. 7. *d* Ex. xv. 26.

be employed in a more appropriate or a more elevated act than when engaged in his praise. ¶ *And all that is within me,* etc. All my powers and faculties; all that can be employed in his praise:—the heart, the will, the affections, the emotions. The idea is, that God is worthy of all the praise and adoration which the entire *man* can render. No one of his faculties or powers should be exempt from the duty and the privilege of praise.

2. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.* The repetition here denotes the intensity or earnestness of the wish or desire of the psalmist. It is an emphatic calling upon his soul, that is, himself, never to forget the many favours which God was continually conferring upon him. ¶ *And forget not all his benefits. Any* of his favours. This refers not to those favours in the aggregate, but it is a call to remember them in particular. The word rendered *benefits*—גְּמוּל, *gemūl*—means properly an act, work, doing, whether good or evil, Ps. cxxxvii. 8; and then, *desert,* or what a man deserves *for* his act; *recompence.* It is rendered *deserving* in Judges ix. 16;—*benefit,* as here, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 25;—*desert,* Ps. xxviii. 4;—*reward,* Ps. xciv. 2; Isa. iii. 11; Obad. 15;—*recompence,* Prov. xii. 14; Isa. xxxv. 4; lix. 18; lxvi. 6; Jer. li. 6; Lam. iii. 64; Joel iii. 4, 7. The proper reference here is to the Divine *dealings,*—to what God had *done,*—as a reason for blessing his name. His *dealings* with the psalmist had been such as to call for praise and gratitude. What those *dealings* particularly were he specifies in the following verses. The call here on his soul is not to forget these Divine dealings, as laying the foundation for praise. We shall find, when we reach the end of life, that *all* which God has done, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at the time, was so connected with our good as to make it a proper subject of praise and thanksgiving.

3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.* Pardoning all thy sins. That is, It is a characteristic of God to pardon sin, and I have evidence that he has done it in my own case, and this is a ground for praise. It is observable that this is the *first* thing in view of the psalmist—the first of the "benefits" which he had received from God, or the first thing in importance among his acts or his dealings, which called for praise. Properly considered, this *is* the first thing which calls for praise. That God is a merciful God,—that he has declared his willingness to pardon sin,—that he has devised and revealed a way by which this can be done,—and that he has actually done it in our own case, is the most important matter for which we should praise him. When we understand all the things which most affect our welfare, and which enter most deeply into our happiness here and hereafter, we shall find that this is a blessing compared with which all other favours are comparative trifles. ¶ *Who healeth all thy diseases.* Perhaps, in the case of the psalmist, referring to some particular instance in which he had been recovered from dangerous sickness. The word rendered *diseases*–תַּחֲלוּאִים, *tahhalūim*—occurs only in the plural form. It is translated *sicknesses,* in Deut. xxix. 22; *diseases,* as here, in 2 Chron. xxi. 19; *them that are sick,* in Jer. xiv. 18; and "*grievous* [deaths]" in Jer. xvi. 4. It does not elsewhere occur. It is applicable to all forms of sickness; or in this place it may refer to some particular diseases with which David had been afflicted. We have several allusions in the Psalms to times when the authors of the psalms were afflicted with sickness.

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things; so that* thy youth is [e] renewed like the eagle's.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

[e] Isa. xl. 31.

So in the Psalms of David. Comp. Ps. vi. 2; xxxviii. 7; xli. 8. The thought here is, that it is a proper ground of praise to God that he has the power of healing disease. All instances of restoration to health are illustrations of this, for whatever may be the skill of physicians, or the wise adaptation of means, healing virtue comes from God alone.

4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.* That is, who saves it from death when exposed to danger, or when attacked by disease. The word "destruction" or *corruption* here is equivalent to the grave, since it is there that the body returns to corruption. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvi. 10. ¶ *Who crowneth thee.* The idea here is not merely that God is the source of these blessings, but that there is something of beauty, of dignity, of honour, as in the conferring of a crown or garland on any one. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxv. 11. ¶ *With loving-kindness and tender mercies.* Mercy and compassions. God showed mercy to him,—evinced compassion,—and these were so abundant that they might be said to be the crown or ornament of his life.

5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good* things. The word translated *thy mouth* here is rendered in the Chaldee *thy age;* in the Arabic, the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate, *thy desire;* in the Syriac, *thy body;* De Wette renders it, *thy age.* So also Tholuck. The Hebrew word—עֶדִי, *adi*—is rendered *ornaments* in Ex. xxxiii. 4—6; 2 Sam. i. 24; Isa. xlix. 18; Jer. ii. 32; iv. 30; Ezek. vii. 20; xvi. 11, 17 (marg.); xxiii. 40; and *mouth* in Ps. xxxii. 9, as here. These are the only places in which it occurs. Gesenius renders it here *age,* and supposes that it stands in contrast with the word *youth* in the other part of the verse. The connexion would seem to demand this, though it is difficult to make it out from any usage of the Hebrew word. Professor Alexander renders it *thy soul*—from the supposition that the Hebrew word *ornament* is used as if in reference to the idea that the *soul* is the chief glory or ornament of man. This seems, however, to be a very forced explanation. I confess myself unable to determine the meaning. ¶ So that *thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* Comp. Isa. xl. 31. The allusion, to which there is supposed to be a reference here, is explained in the Notes on that passage. Whatever may be true in regard to the supposed fact pertaining to the eagle, about its renewing its strength and vigour in old age, the meaning here is simply that the strength of the psalmist in old age *became* like the strength of the eagle. Sustained by the bounty of God in his old age he became, as it were, young again.

6. *The* LORD *executeth righteousness and judgment.* That is, *justice.* He sees that justice is done to the oppressed. He is on their side. His law, his commands, his judicial decisions, his providential interpositions, are in their favour. This does not mean that it will be done at once; or that there will never be any delay; or that they may not suffer even for a long time,—for this occurs in fact; but the meaning is, that God has their true interest at heart; that at proper times, and whenever and wherever there are any dealings of his in the case, his acts are in favour of those that are oppressed; and that there will be sooner or later such interpositions in their behalf as shall entirely vindicate their cause. ¶ *For all that*

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and [1] plenteous in mercy.

[1] *great of.*

9 He [f] will not always chide; neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

[f] Isa. lvii. 16; Micah vii. 18, 19.

are oppressed. By harsh laws; by unjust governments; by slavery; by unrighteous decisions in courts; by the pride and power of wicked men. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 17, 23–27.

7. *He made known his ways unto Moses.* This is another ground of praise,—that God had *revealed his will;* that this had been done in an indubitable manner to Moses; and that these revelations had been recorded by him for the instruction and guidance of his people. The word "*ways*" here means his laws; his methods of administration; the principles on which he governs mankind, and the conditions on which he will save men. There is no higher ground of gratitude to God than the fact that he has given a revelation to mankind. ¶ *His acts unto the children of Israel.* His methods of doing things have been made known to them; and his acts—his interpositions—have been in their favour.

8. *The* LORD is *merciful and gracious.* See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 38. The idea here is derived evidently from Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7—that great and glorious statement of God himself in regard to his own character. Our world is a different world under that statement from what it would be if that and kindred declarations had not been made. There is here a *progression* of thought; an *advance* on the previous statements. At first the psalmist referred to his own individual experience (vers. 3–5); then he referred to the dealings of God towards the Hebrew people (vers. 6, 7); and now he rises to the general contemplation of his character as it relates to all mankind. It was a characteristic of God in respect to all, that he was kind, compassionate, and forbearing. ¶ *Slow to anger.* That is, patient; not soon excited; bearing much, and bearing it long. See James v. 11; comp. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. ¶ *And plenteous in mercy.* Marg., *great of mercy.* The Hebrew word means *much,* or *great;* and the idea is, that mercy is not manifested by him in small or stinted measure. It is rich; full; abundant; overflowing; free.

9. *He will not always chide.* Rebuke; contend; strive;—for so the Hebrew word means. He will not always contend with men, or manifest his displeasure. See Notes on Isa. lvii. 16; Ps. lxxviii. 38, 39. This implies that he *may* chide or rebuke his people, but that this will not be for ever. He will punish them; he will manifest his displeasure at their sins; he will show that he does not approve of their course, but he will show that he *loves them,* and does not seek their ruin. ¶ *Neither will he keep* his anger *for ever.* The words *his anger* are supplied by the translators, but not improperly. The meaning is the same as in the former member of the sentence. He will not cherish hatred when the object of the chastisement is accomplished. It is not his character to retain anger for its own sake, or for any personal gratification.

10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins.* All may say this, and this *is* a ground of thanksgiving and praise. It is a matter for which we *should* render unceasing praise that God has not done to us as our sins deserved. Who of us can fail to stand in awe and to tremble when we think what God *might* have justly done to us; what sufferings he *might* have brought upon us, which would have been no more than we have

11 For [1] as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed [g] our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.[h]

[1] *according to the height of heaven.*
[g] Jer. l. 20.
[h] Gen. iii. 19.

deserved; what pain of body, what distress of mind, what anguish of bereavement—what sorrow, danger, sickness, losses—we *might* have suffered before the point would be reached at which it could be said that we were suffering more than a holy and just God might properly inflict on us. ¶ *Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* That is, he has not inflicted suffering on us that could be regarded in any proper sense as a just retribution for what we have done; or, so that it could properly be said that the one fairly *measured* the other.

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth.* See Notes on Ps. lvii. 10. Comp. Notes on Isa. lv. 9. The literal translation of the phrase here would be, *For like the height of the heavens above the earth.* The heavens—the starry heavens—are the highest objects of which we have any knowledge; and hence the comparison is used to denote the great mercy of God,—meaning that it is as great as can be conceived; that there is nothing beyond it; that we cannot imagine that it could be greater—as we can imagine nothing higher than the heavens. ¶ So *great is his mercy toward them that fear him.* To those who reverence and serve him. That is, His mercy is thus great in forgiving their offences; in imparting grace; in giving them support and consolation.

12. *As far as the east is from the west.* As far as possible; as far as we can imagine. These are the points in our apprehension most distant from each other, and as we can conceive nothing beyond them, so the meaning is, that we cannot imagine our sins could be more effectually removed than they are. The literal meaning of the Hebrew is, *like the distance of the east from the west;* or, *like its being far.* ¶ So *far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* That is, he has put them entirely away. They are so removed that they cannot affect us any more. We are safe from all condemnation for our sins, as if they had not been committed at all. Comp. Notes on Isa. xliii. 25; xliv. 22.

13. *Like as a father pitieth* his *children.* Heb., *Like the compassion of a father for his children.* See Notes on Matt. vii. 9–11. God often compares himself with a father, and it is by carrying out our ideas of what enters into the parental character that we get our best conceptions of the character of God. See Notes on Matt. vi. 9. That which is referred to here, is the natural affection of the parent for the child; the tender love which is borne by the parent for his offspring; the disposition to care for its wants; the readiness to forgive when an offence has been committed. Comp. Luke xv. 22–24. Such, in an infinitely higher degree, is the compassion—the kindness—which God has for those that love him. ¶ So *the* LORD *pitieth them that fear him.* He has compassion on them. He exercises towards them the paternal feeling.

14. *For he knoweth our frame.* Our formation; of what we are made; how we are made. That is, he knows that we are made of dust; that we are frail; that we are subject to decay; that we soon sink under a heavy load. This is given as a reason why he pities us—that we *are* so frail and feeble, and that we are so easily broken down by a pressure of trial. ¶ *He remembereth that we* are *dust.* Made

15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass; as a [i] flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is [1] gone; and the place [k] thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting

[i] Isa. xl. 6—8; James i. 10, 11.

[1] *not.* [k] Job xx. 9.

of the earth. Gen. ii. 7; iii. 19. In his dealings with us he does not forget of what frail materials he made us, and how little our frames can bear. He tempers his dealings to the weakness and frailty of our nature, and his compassion interposes when the weight of sorrows would crush us. Remembering, too, our weakness, he interposes by his power to sustain us, and to enable us to bear what our frame could not otherwise endure. Comp. Notes on Isa. lvii. 16.

15. As for *man.* Literally, "Man; like the grass are his days!" The thought is fixed on *man*:—man so frail and weak; man, not only made originally of earth, but man delicate, feeble, soon to pass away like the springing grass, or like the fading flower. ¶ *His days* are *as grass.* See Notes on Ps. xc. 5, 6; comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 6–8; 1 Pet. i. 24. ¶ *As a flower of the field.* As a blossom. It opens with beauty and fragrance, but soon fades and perishes. ¶ *So he flourisheth.* Rather, "So he blossoms." That is, he is like a flower that is fresh and beautiful, and that soon withers away.

16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone.* Marg., as in Heb., *it is not.* The reference is either to a hot and burning wind, that dries up the flower; or to a furious wind that tears it from its stem; or to a gentle breeze that takes off its petals as they loosen their hold, and are ready to fall. So man falls,—as if a breath — a breeze — came over him, and he is gone. How easily is man swept off! How little force, apparently, does it require to remove the most beautiful and blooming youth of either sex from the earth! How speedily does beauty vanish; how soon, like a fading flower, does such a one pass away! ¶ *And the place thereof shall know it no more.* That is, It shall no more appear in the place where it was seen and known. The "place" is here personified as if capable of recognizing the objects which are present, and as if it missed the things which were once there. They are gone. So it will soon be in all the places where *we* have been; where we have been seen; where we have been known. In our dwellings; at our tables; in our places of business; in our offices, counting-rooms, studies, laboratories; in the streets where we have walked from day to day; in the pulpit, the court-room, the legislation-hall; in the place of revelry or festivity; in the prayer-room, the Sabbath-school, the sanctuary — we shall be seen no longer. We shall be GONE:—and the impression on those who *are* there, and with whom we have been associated, will be best expressed by the language, *he is gone!* Gone;—where? No one that survives can tell. All that they whom we leave will know will be that we are absent—that we are *gone.* But to us now, how momentous the inquiry, *Where shall we be, when we are gone from among the living?* Other places *will* "know" us; will it be in heaven, or hell?

17. *But the mercy of the* LORD. The favour of the Lord; or, his loving-kindness. ¶ Is *from everlasting to everlasting.* Is from the eternity past to the eternity to come. It had its foundation in the eternal decrees of God; it has its security in his purpose that where it is conferred, it shall not be withdrawn. It had no beginning; it will have no end. There never was a period in the past when it was not the purpose of God to save his people; there never will be a period in the future when it will be said that his saving mercy has

upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children:

18 To *l* such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

l Ex. xx. 6; Deut. vii. 9.

19 The LORD hath prepared his *m* throne in the heavens; and his kingdom *n* ruleth over all.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, [1] that excel in strength, *o* that do his commandments,

m Ps. xi. 4. *n* Dan. iv. 34, 35.
[1] *mighty in.* *o* Joel ii. 11.

ceased. It would be difficult to think of a statement which would at the same time, in so few words, confirm at once the doctrine of the Divine decrees, and the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If either of these doctrines is denied, then what is here stated by the psalmist is not true:—if the doctrine of the Divine decrees is denied, then his purpose of mercy had a beginning, and is not "*from* everlasting;" if the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is denied, then his mercy has an end, and is not "*to* everlasting." ¶ *Upon them that fear him.* In respect to those who are his true worshippers, or his true people. ¶ *And his righteousness.* His righteous purpose; or, his purpose in regard to their *becoming* righteous. ¶ *Unto children's children.* Literally, *sons of sons.* That is, his purposes embrace the children and children's children of the righteous; or, they are included in the covenant of mercy. See Notes on Acts ii. 39. Comp. Ex. xx. 6.

18. *To such as keep his covenant.* To such as adhere to the arrangements of his covenant, or who are faithful on their part. God will be faithful to his part of the covenant; and where there is fidelity on the part of his people, the blessings implied in the covenant will be conferred on them and on their children. The promise is ample, and the fidelity of God is certain, but still it is true that *in* those promises, and *in* that fidelity, it is implied that his people on their part must be faithful also, or the blessings will not be bestowed. There are no promises of blessings to the unfaithful, nor have those who are unfaithful any reason to hope that they or theirs will be partakers of the blessings of the covenant of mercy. Our only hope that we or our children will be partakers of the blessings of the covenant is to be found in the fact that we ourselves are faithful to God. ¶ *And to those that remember his commandments to do them.* Who do not *forget* his law. If they *do* forget it, they have no right to expect the blessing. Obedience and fidelity are our only reasonable grounds of expectation of the blessing of God.

19. *The* LORD *hath prepared his throne in the heavens.* He has *fixed* his throne there. This is the ground of the security that his blessing will be imparted to those who fear him, and to their children's children, or that it will be transmitted to coming generations. God is a Sovereign. His throne is fixed and firm. His dominion is not vacillating and changing. His reign is not, like the reign of earthly monarchs, dependent on the capriciousness of a changeable will, or on passion; nor is it liable to be altered by death, by revolution, or a new dynasty. The throne of God is ever the same, and nothing can shake or overthrow it. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 4. ¶ *And his kingdom ruleth over all.* He reigns over all the universe—the heavens and the earth; and he can, therefore, execute all his purposes. Comp. Ps. xlvii. 2.

20. *Bless the* LORD. The psalm began (vers. 1, 2) with an exhortation to "bless the Lord." That exhortation was, however, then addressed by the psalmist to his own soul, and was especially founded on the benefits which he had himself received. The psalm closes also with

hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers [p] of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all [q] his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

p Dan. vii. 10; Heb. i. 14. *q* Ps. cxlv. 10.

an exhortation to "bless the Lord," yet on a much wider scale. The psalmist feels that there is not only occasion for *him* to do it, but that the reason for it extends to the whole universe. The meaning is, that God is worthy of universal praise; and all ranks of beings—all worlds—should join in that praise. Man, feeble, frail, dying, could not come up to the fulness of the praise required. Praise such as was appropriate to God—such as his perfections and works deserved—demanded loftier powers than those of man;—the loftiest powers in the universe. ¶ *Ye his angels.* All beings higher than man; beings around and before his throne. ¶ *That excel in strength.* Marg., as in Heb., *mighty in strength,* and therefore more *able* to offer adequate praise. ¶ *That do his commandments.* Who perfectly obey his law, and who, therefore, can render more acceptable praise than can ever come from human lips. ¶ *Hearkening unto the voice of his word.* Who always listen to his voice; who never are disobedient; and who can, therefore, approach him *as* holy beings, and more appropriately worship him.

21. *Bless ye the* LORD, *all* ye *his hosts.* His armies; the vast multitudes of holy beings, arranged and marshalled as hosts for battle, in all parts of the universe. Comp. Notes on Isa. i. 9; Eph. i. 21. ¶ Ye *ministers of his.* The same beings referred to by the word "hosts," and all others who may be employed in executing his will. The "hosts" or armies of the Lord are thus marshalled that they *may* "do his pleasure," or that they may execute his purposes. ¶ *That do his pleasure.* What is agreeable to him; that is, who perform his will. Employed in his service, and appointed to execute his will, they are called on to bless his name. The fact of *being* employed in his service is a sufficient reason for praise. It is implied here that those "ministers of his" actually *do* his will. They are obedient to his commands; they regard themselves *as* employed for him.

22. *Bless the* LORD, *all his works.* All that he has made, animate and inanimate, intelligent and brute. It is not uncommon to call on the inanimate creation to join with intelligent beings in praising God. Comp. Ps. cxlviii. The same thing is often found in the "Paradise Lost," and in fact occurs in all poetry. ¶ *In all places of his dominion.* Wherever he reigns, on earth, or in heaven; here or in distant worlds. ¶ *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.* Ending the psalm as it began, and with the additional reason derived from the fact that the *universe* is called on to do it. As one of the creatures of God; as a part of that vast universe, the psalmist now calls on his own soul to unite with all others—to be one of them—in praising and blessing the Creator. He *desired* thus to unite with all others. His heart was full; and in a universe thus joyous—thus vocal with praise—he wished to be one among the immense multitudes that lifted their voices in adoration of the great Jehovah.

PSALM CIV.

This psalm in the Syriac, the Arabic, the Greek, and the Latin versions, is ascribed to David, but on what authority is now unknown. That it *may* have been composed by him cannot be doubted, but there is no certain evidence that he was the author. In the Hebrew, it has no title, and there is nothing in the psalm itself which would furnish any indication as to its authorship.

The occasion on which the psalm was

composed is unknown, and cannot now be ascertained. Rosenmüller and Hengstenberg suppose that it was at the time of the return from the Babylonish exile, and that it was intended to be used at the re-dedication of the temple. But it has no special applicability to such a service; it has no such local references as would fix it to that time; it has nothing which would make it inappropriate at *any* time, or in *any* public service. It is such a psalm as might be composed at any period of the world, or in any country, where there was an intelligent view and a careful observation of the works of God. It implies, indeed, such a knowledge of the fact that God made the world as could be obtained only by revelation; but it evinces also a power of close observation; a large acquaintance with the creation around us; a relish for the scenes of nature; as well as a rich poetic faculty, and a power of description, adapted to place such scenes before the mind as realities, and to make us feel, in reading it, that we are in the very midst of the things which are described,—so that they seem to live and move before our eyes.

The psalm was probably founded on the record of the creation in Gen. i., with a design to show that the order of the creation, as there described, *was adapted to the purposes which were intended, and was carried out in the providential arrangements now existing on the earth;* or, that, taking the order of the creation as described there, the existing state of things furnished an illustration of the wisdom and benevolence of that order. Accordingly, in the psalm, it was convenient for the writer to follow substantially the *order* observed in Gen. i. in narrating the creation of the world; and he states, under each part, the *acting out* of that order in existing things;—creation in its being actually carried out, or in its results—the creation *developing itself* in the varied and wonderful forms of being—of vegetable and animal life—of beauty, of harmonious movement, of ceaseless activity,—on the land, in the air, and in the waters. Accordingly there is in the psalm,—

I. An allusion to the work of the *first* day, vers. 2–5 (comp. Gen. i. 1-5): —to the stretching out of the heavens as a curtain; to the source of light,—"who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;"—to the laying of the foundations of the earth to abide for ever;—to God as Creator of all things, with the additional ideas of his being clothed with honour and majesty; making the clouds his chariot; walking upon the wings of the wind; making the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers.

II. An allusion to the work of the *second* day, vers. 6-9 (comp. Gen. i. 6–8). Here it is the separation of the waters—the power exerted on the waters of the earth;—in Genesis, the dividing of the waters above from those on the earth; in the psalm, the poetic images of the deep covering the earth as with a garment; the waters climbing up the mountains, and rolling down into the valleys, until they found the place appointed for them, a boundary which they could not pass so as to return again and cover the earth.

III. An allusion to the work of the *third* day, vers. 10–18 (comp. Gen. i. 9–13). In Genesis, the waters gathering together; the dry land appearing, and the earth yielding grass, and herbs, and fruit trees,—the creation of vegetables; in the psalm, the springs running into the valleys, and winding among the hills,—giving drink to the beasts, and quenching the thirst of wild asses,—furnishing a place for the fowls to build their nests, causing the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man,—supplying him wine to make him glad, and oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen his heart,—bringing forth the trees of the Lord, the cedars of Lebanon for the birds to make their nests, and the fir trees for the stork,—making the hills a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies:—that is, the work of creation on the third day is seen by the eye of the psalmist not *as* mere *creation*, but in the *result*,—as enlivened and animated by all these varied forms of life, activity, and beauty, which had been spread over the earth as the *consequence* of this part of the work of creation.

IV. An allusion to the work of the *fourth* day, vers. 19–23 (comp. Gen. i. 14–19). Here, as in the previous divisions of the psalm, it is not a reference to the mere *creation*—to the power evinced—but to the creation of the sun and moon *as seen in the effects* produced by them—the living world as it is influenced by the sun and moon:—the sea-

PSALM CIV.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul. O LORD, my God, thou art very great; thou [r] art clothed with honour and majesty:

2 Who coverest *thyself* with light [s] as *with* a garment; who [t] stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;

3 Who [u] layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds [v] his chariot;

r Rev. i. 13, etc.

s Dan. vii. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 16.
t Isa. xl. 22. u Amos ix. 6. v Isa. xix. 1.

sons—the alternations of day and night. Thus (ver. 20), at night, when the sun has gone down, all the beasts of the forest are seen creeping forth; the lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God; and again when the sun arises (vers. 22, 23), they are seen gathering themselves together, and retiring to their dens, and *man* is seen going forth to *his* work and to his labour until the evening. It is thus not the original act of creation which is before the mind of the psalmist, but that act in its development, or when it is seen what God contemplated by it, or what he intended that in this respect the world should be when he made the sun, the moon, and the stars.

V. An allusion to the work of the *fifth* day, vers. 24–30 (comp. Gen. i. 20–23); the creation of *life* in the waters, and in the air; as the fowls of heaven—the whales, etc. Here, too, the psalmist sees all this as it *is*,—or developed on the sea, and in the air. *In* the sea there are things creeping innumerable, small and great; there are the ships; there is leviathan; there is everywhere animated life; there are beings innumerable all dependent on God; there are the processes of renewing, creating, destroying, continually going on—a moving scene, showing the *effect* of *life* as it is produced by God.

VI. It is remarkable, however, that the allusion to the successive days of the work of creation, so obvious in the other parts of the psalm, seems to close here, and there is no distinct reference to the sixth day, or the seventh,—to the creation of *man* as the crowning work, and to the *rest* provided for man in the appointment of the Sabbath. The purpose of the psalmist seems to have been to celebrate the praises of God in the varied scene—the panorama passing before the eye in the works of *nature*. The purpose did not seem to be to contemplate *man*—his creation,—his history,—but *nature*, as seen around us. The remainder of the psalm, therefore, is occupied with a description of the glory of the Lord *as thus manifested*; the works of God as fitted to fill the mind with exalted views of his greatness, and with a desire that his reign may be universal and perpetual, vers. 31–35.

1. *Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.* See Ps. ciii. 1. ¶ *O* LORD *my God, thou art very great.* This is a reason why the psalmist calls on his soul to bless God; viz., for the fact that he is so exalted; so vast in his perfections; so powerful, so wise, so great. ¶ *Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.* That is, with the emblems of honour and majesty, as a king is arrayed in royal robes. Creation is the garment with which God has invested himself. Comp. Notes on Ps. xciii. 1.

2. *Who coverest* thyself *with light as* with *a garment.* Referring to the first work of creation (Gen. i. 3), "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." He *seemed* to put on light as a garment; he himself appeared as if invested with light. It was the first *manifestation* of God. He seemed at once to have put on light as his robe. ¶ *Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.* As an expanse spread over us. The word here used means a curtain or hanging, so called from its tremulous motion, from a word meaning to tremble. Thus it is applied to a curtain before a door; to a tent, etc. It is applied here to the heavens, as they seem to be *spread out* like the curtains of a tent, as if God had spread them out for a tent for himself to dwell in. See Notes on Isa. xl. 22.

3. *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters.* The word

who *w* walketh upon the wings of the wind;

4 Who *x* maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire;*y*

w Ps. xviii. 10. *x* Heb. i. 7. *y* 2 Kings ii. 11; vi. 17.

5 [1] *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever.

6 Thou [z] coveredst it with the

[1] *He hath founded the earth upon her bases.* *z* Gen. i. 9.

here rendered *layeth* — from קָרָה, *karah*—means properly to meet; then, in Hiphil, to cause to meet, or to fit into each other, as beams or joists do in a dwelling. It is a word which would be properly applied to the construction of a house, and to the right adjustment of the different materials employed in building it. The word rendered *beams*—עֲלִיָּה, *aliyah*—means an upper chamber, a loft, such as rises, in Oriental houses, above the flat roof; in the New Testament, the ὑπερῷον, rendered *upper room*, Acts i. 13; ix. 37, 39; xx. 8. It refers here to the chamber—the exalted abode of God—as if raised *above* all other edifices, or *above* the world. The word *waters* here refers to the description of the creation in Gen. i. 6, 7,—the waters "above the firmament," and the waters "below the firmament." The allusion here is to the waters *above* the firmament; and the meaning is, that God had constructed the place of his own abode —the room where he dwelt—*in* those waters; that is, in the most exalted place in the universe. It does not mean that he made it *of* the waters, but that his home—his dwelling-place —was *in* or *above* those waters, *as if* he had built his dwelling not on solid earth or rock, but in the waters, giving stability to that which seems to have no stability, and making the very waters a foundation for the structure of his abode. ¶ *Who maketh the clouds his chariot.* Who rides on the clouds as in a chariot. See Notes on Isa. xix. 1. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 11. ¶ *Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 10.

4. *Who maketh his angels spirits.* The meaning here literally would be, "Who makes the winds his messengers," or "his angels;" that is, who employs them to execute his purpose; who sends them out *as* messengers or angels to do his will. ¶ *His ministers a flaming fire.* That is, Fire is employed by him—in lightnings—to accomplish his purpose as his ministers or his servants. They are entirely under his command. They are sent by him to do his will; to carry out his designs. This is intended to describe the majesty and the power of God,—that he can employ wind and lightning—tempest and storm—to go on errands such as he commands; to fulfil his plans; to do his bidding. For the application of this to the angels, and as employed by the apostle Paul to prove the inferiority of the angels to the Messiah, see Notes on Heb. i. 7.

5. Who *laid the foundations of the earth.* Referring still to the creation of the earth. The margin is, *He hath founded the earth upon her bases.* The Hebrew word rendered in the margin *her bases* means properly a place; then a basis or foundation. The idea is, that there was something, as it were, placed *under* the earth to support it. The idea is not uncommon in the Scriptures. Comp. Notes on Job xxxviii. 4. ¶ That *it should not be removed for ever.* So that it cannot be shaken out of its place. That is, It is fixed, permanent, solid. Its foundations do not give way, as edifices reared by man. but it abides the same from age to age—the most fixed and stable object of which we have any knowledge. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 69.

6. *Thou coveredst it with the deep as* with *a garment.* Comp. Notes on Job xxxviii. 9. The meaning is, that

deep as *with* a garment: the waters stood above the "mountains.

7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

8 [1] They go up by the moun-

a Ps. xxxiii. 7, 9.

[1] Or, *the mountains ascend, the valleys descend.*

tains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

9 Thou [b] hast set a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth.

b Job xxxviii. 10, 11.

God covered the earth with the sea—the waters—the abyss—as if a garment had been spread over it. The reference is to Gen. i. 2, where, in the account of the work of creation, what is there called "*the deep*"—the abyss—(the same Hebrew word as here—תְּהוֹם, *tehom*)—covered the earth, or was what *appeared*, or was manifest, before the waters were collected into seas, and the dry land was seen. ¶ *The waters stood above the mountains.* Above what are now the mountains. As yet no dry land appeared. It seemed to be one wide waste of waters. This does not refer to the Deluge, but to the appearance of the earth at the time of the creation, before the gathering of the waters into seas and oceans, Gen. i. 9. At that stage in the work, all that appeared was a wide waste of waters.

7. *At thy rebuke they fled.* At thy command; or when thou didst speak to them. The Hebrew word also implies the notion of *rebuke*, or *reproof*, as if there were some displeasure or dissatisfaction. Prov. xiii. 1; xvii. 10; Eccl. vii. 5; Isa. xxx. 17; Ps. lxxvi. 6. It is *as if* God had been displeased that the waters prevented the appearing or the rising of the dry land, and had commanded them to *hasten* to their beds and channels, and no longer to cover the earth. The allusion is to Gen. i. 9, and there is nowhere to be found a more sublime expression than this. Even the command, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light," so much commended by Longinus as an instance of sublimity, does not surpass this in grandeur. ¶ *At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.* They fled in dismay. The Hebrew word—חָפַז, *hhaphaz*—contains the idea of haste, trepidation, consternation, alarm, *as if* they were frightened; Ps. xxxi. 22. God spake in tones of thunder, and they fled. It is impossible to conceive anything more sublime than this.

8. *They go up by the mountains,* etc. That is, when they were gathered together into seas. They seemed to roll and tumble over hills and mountains, and to run down in valleys, until they found the deep hollows which had been formed for seas, and where they were permanently collected together. The margin here is, *The mountains ascend, the valleys descend.* So it is translated in the Septuagint, in the Latin Vulgate, by Luther, and by De Wette. The more natural idea, however, is that in our translation: "They [the waters] go up mountains; they descend valleys." ¶ *Unto the place.* The deep hollows of the earth, which seem to have been scooped out to make a place for them. ¶ *Which thou hast founded for them.* Where thou hast laid a permanent foundation for them on which to rest; that is, which thou hast prepared for them.

9. *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over.* See Notes on Job xxvi. 10; xxxviii. 10, 11. ¶ *That they turn not again to cover the earth.* As it was before the dry land appeared; or as the earth was when "darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. i. 2), and when all was mingled earth and water. It is *possible* that in connexion with this, the psalmist may also have had his eye

10 [1] He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* [2] run among the hills.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses [3] quench their thirst.

[1] *Who.* [2] *walk.*

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* [4] sing among the branches.

13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

[3] *break.* [4] *give a voice.*

on the facts connected with the deluge in the time of Noah, and the promise then made that the world should no more be destroyed by a flood, Gen. ix. 11, 15.

10. *He sendeth the springs into the valleys.* Though the waters are gathered together into seas, yet God has taken care that the earth shall not be dry, parched, and barren. He has made provision for watering it, and by a most wise, wonderful, and benevolent arrangement, he has formed springs among the valleys and the hills. It is now animated nature which comes before the eye of the psalmist; and all this he traces to the fact that the earth is *watered*, and that it is not a waste of rocks and sands. The allusion in this part of the psalm (see the Introd.) is to the earth as covered with vegetation,—or, to the third day of the week of creation (Gen. i. 9–13), which, in Genesis, is connected with the gathering of the waters into seas. This description continues to vers. 18. The literal rendering here would be, "sending springs into the valleys." He conducts the waters from the great reservoirs—lakes and seas—in such a way that they form springs in the valleys. The way in which this is done is among the most wonderful and the most benevolent in nature,—by that power, derived from heat, by which the waters of the ocean, contrary to the natural law of gravitation, are lifted up in small particles—in vapour—and carried by the clouds where they are needed, and let fall upon the earth, to water the plants, and to form fountains, rivulets, and streams,—and borne thus to the highest mountains, to be filtered through the ground to form springs and streams below. ¶ Which *run among the hills.* Marg., *walk.* That is, they go between the hills. The streams of water flow along in the natural valleys which have been made for them.

11. *They give drink to every beast of the field.* All are thus kept alive. The wild beasts that roam at large, find water thus provided for them. ¶ *The wild asses quench their thirst.* Marg., as in Heb., *break.* The meaning is, that the most wild and ungovernable of beasts—those which are farthest from the habits of domesticated animals, and the most independent of any aid derived from man, find abundance everywhere. On the word rendered *wild asses*, and on the habits of the animals here referred to, see Notes on Job xi. 12.

12. *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation.* Among them the fowls of the air dwell. That is, among the trees which spring up by the fountains and water-courses. The whole picture is full of animation and beauty. ¶ Which *sing among the branches.* Marg., as in Heb., *give a voice.* Their voice is heard—their sweet music—in the foliage of the trees which grow on the margin of the streams and by the fountains. There is scarcely to be found a more beautiful poetic image than this.

13. *He watereth the hills from his chambers.* The waters, as stated before, run in the valleys—in the natural channels made for them among the hills, ver. 10. But still, it was a fact that the hills themselves were watered; that there were springs far up their heights; and that vegetation was sustained above the reach of the fountains and streams below; and it was a proof of the Divine skill and beneficence

14 He causeth [c] the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth;
15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* [1] oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.

c Ps. lxv. 9, 10.

1 *to make* his *face shine with oil*, or, *more than oil*.

that, in some way, water was furnished on the summits and sides of the hills themselves. This was caused, the psalmist says, by God's pouring water on them, as it were, from his own "chambers"—his abode on high. The allusion is, doubtless, to rain, which seems to be poured down from the very abode of God. The word rendered *chambers* means *upper rooms*, (see Notes on ver. 3); and the reference is to the dwelling-place of God, as far above the earth. ¶ *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.* Thy doings; with what thou hast done. All the wants of the earth seem to be met and "satisfied;" all that it could desire to make it fertile and beautiful; and the proper abode of man, of beast, and of fowl, has been granted. It has no cause of complaint; nothing has been left undone, in the valleys or on the hills, on the dry land or in the waters, that was needful to be done to carry out the purpose for which it has been called into being.

14. *He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.* Out of the earth there is caused to grow every variety of food necessary for the various orders of beings that are placed upon it. The idea here is not merely that of *abundance;* it is also that of *variety:*—the wants and tastes of all have been consulted in the productions of the earth. The one earth—the same earth—has been made to produce the endless varieties of food required for the creatures that have been placed on it. The word *grass* here refers to all the vegetable productions needful for cattle. ¶ *And herb for the service of man.* Gen. i. 29. The word *herb* here would include every green plant or vegetable; or all that the earth produces for the food of man. This, of course, refers to the earth as it came from the hand of God, and to the original arrangement, before permission was given to man to eat the flesh of animals, Gen. ix. 3. The word translated *service* might be rendered *culture,*—as if man was to cultivate it for his use, not that it was to be produced, as the food for cattle, spontaneously. ¶ *That he may bring forth food out of the earth.* Heb., *bread.* That is, that by culture he may bring forth that which would make bread.

15. *And wine* that *maketh glad the heart of man,* etc. Literally, "And wine [it] gladdens the heart of man to make his face to shine more than oil." Marg., *to make his face shine with oil,* or *more than oil.* The latter expresses the idea most accurately. So De Wette renders it. The meaning is, that the earth is made to produce wine (or grapes which produce wine), and this exhilarates the heart, so that the effect is seen on the countenance, making it more bright and cheerful than it is when anointed with oil. On the use of oil, see Notes on Ps. xxiii. 5. The reference here, in the original, is not to wine *and* oil as produced by the earth, as would seem to be implied in our translation, but to wine that makes the heart glad, and the face brighter than if anointed with oil. The psalmist here states a *fact* about the use of wine—a well-known fact that it exhilarates the heart, and brightens the countenance; and he states it merely *as* a fact. He says nothing on the question whether the use of wine as a beverage is, or is not, proper and safe. Comp. Notes on John ii. 10. ¶ *And bread* which *strengtheneth man's heart.* That is, Which sustains the heart, — that being regarded as the seat of life. Comp. Gen. xviii. 5.

16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap:* the cedars [d] of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
17 Where the birds make their nests: *as for* the stork, the fir-trees *are* her house.
18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats, *and* the rocks for the conies.

[d] Ps. xcii. 12.

16. *The trees of the* LORD. From the grass, from the herb, from the vine, and from bread, as adapted to sustain the living beings upon the earth, the psalmist passes to the more lofty and grand productions of the vegetable world—to those which display more manifestly the power of God, and which furnish abodes and retreats for the various orders of living beings. The phrase "the trees of the Lord" means great and magnificent trees—as the expression "mountains of God" means great and lofty mountains—as if they seemed to *approach* God, or as if no appellation would so well describe their nature as that which was derived from the Infinite One. See Notes on Ps. xxxvi. 6; lxv. 9; lxxx. 10. ¶ *Are full* of sap. The word so rendered means merely to be full, to be saturated,—the words "of sap" being supplied by the translators. The idea is, that, lofty as they are, they are abundantly supplied with that which is necessary to their growth. There is no want—no lack—of that which is needful to supply them. They flourish, sustained abundantly by that which is derived from the earth and the waters. ¶ *The cedars of Lebanon.* As among the loftiest and most magnificent productions of the earth. See Notes on Ps. xxix. 5; xcii. 12; Isa. ii. 13. ¶ *Which he hath planted.* So lofty and large, that it would seem as if none *could* plant them but the Almighty.

17. *Where the birds make their nests.* Furnishing a home for the birds where they may breed their young. In ver. 12, the birds are introduced as singing among the foliage of trees and shrubs by the watercourses; here they are introduced as having their home in the lofty cedars in places which God had made for them. The word rendered *birds* here is the word which in Ps. lxxxiv. 3 is translated *sparrow*, and which is commonly used to denote *small* birds. Comp. Lev. xiv. 4 (margin), and 5–7, 49–53. It is used, however, to denote birds of any kind. See Gen. vii. 14; Ps. viii. 8; xi. 1; cxlviii. 10. ¶ As for *the stork.* See Notes on Job xxxix. 13. ¶ *The fir trees* are *her house.* Her retreat; her abode. The *stork* here is used to represent the larger class of birds. The meaning is, that they build their nests among the fir-trees or cypresses. See Notes on Isa. xiv. 8; xli. 19. So Milton says,—

"The cagle and the *stork*
On cliffs and cedar-tops their eyries build."

They build their nests, however, not only on fir and pine trees, but on houses and castles. Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 504), says of them, "These singular birds do not breed in Syria, but pass over it to Asia Minor, and into Northwestern Europe, where they not only build in fir and pine trees upon the mountains, but also enter cities and villages, and make their nests on houses, castles, and minarets."

18. *The high hills* are *a refuge for the wild goats.* Still keeping up the description of animated nature—the carrying out of the work of creation. The idea is, that nature is full of life. Even the most inaccessible places—the rocks—the high hills—have their inhabitants. Where man cannot climb or dwell, there are abodes of animals which God has made to dwell there, and which find there a refuge—a shelter—a home. On the word here used, and rendered *wild goats*, see Notes on Job xxxix. 1. The word occurs elsewhere only in 1 Sam. xxiv. 2. ¶ And *the rocks for the conies.* The word here employed—שָׁפָן, *Shaphan*—denotes a quadruped that chews the cud, in the manner of a hare (Lev. xi. 5; Deut.

19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts [1] of the forest do creep *forth.*

21 The young lions [e] roar

[1] *thereof do trample on the forest.*
[e] Job xxxviii. 39.

xiv. 7), and living in flocks. The Rabbins render it the *coney,* or rabbit, as our translators have done. The habits of the rabbit accord with this description. The word occurs nowhere else, except in Prov. xxx. 26, where it is rendered, as here, *conies.*

19. *He appointed the moon for seasons.* Gen. i. 14—18. That is, The moon, as well as the sun, is appointed to divide time; to determine its progress; to indicate the return of festival occasions, or appointed times to be observed in any manner. It is, in fact, the foundation of the division of the year into *months,* and consequently the indication of all that is to be observed in the *months* of the year. But for this, there would be no natural divisions of time except those of day and night, and of the year. How great an advantage it is for the purpose of life, to have time broken up into brief intervals or periods which can be marked and remembered, both in our private life and in history, it is not necessary to say. God has been pleased to *add* to the natural divisions of time into days, and years, and months, an *artificial* division—the *fourth* part of the moon's course—*a week,* indicated by the Sabbath, thus greatly facilitating the plans of life in regard to stated times or "seasons," and especially in regard to religious observances. The idea in the passage before us is, that the whole arrangement is one of benevolence, promoting the comfort of man, and bringing the ideas of succession, variety, and beauty into the system. ¶ *The sun knoweth his going down.* As if conscious of what he is doing, he knows the exact time of setting, and never varies, but always obeys the Divine command; never sets *before* his time—unexpectedly shortening the day, and leaving man in sudden darkness in the midst of his toil; and never lingers above the horizon *after* the moment has come for his setting, but withdraws at the exact time, enabling man to close his toil, and seek repose, and giving an opportunity for another class of creatures to come forth on the animated scene. Their good is regarded as well as that of man; and the operations of nature are so arranged as to promote the welfare of all.

20. *Thou makest darkness, and it is night.* Thou hast made arrangements for the return of night—for the alternations of day and night. The Hebrew word rendered *makest,* means *to place;* and the idea is, that God constitutes the darkness, or so disposes things that it occurs. ¶ *Wherein all the beasts of the forest.* The margin is, *the beasts thereof do trample on the forest.* The reference is to the beasts which seek their prey at night. ¶ *Do creep* forth. The Hebrew word here used means properly *to creep,* as the smaller animals do, which have feet, as mice, lizards, crabs, or as those do which glide or drag themselves upon the ground, having no feet, as worms and serpents. Gen. i. 21, 26, 28, 30; ix. 2. The allusion here is to the quiet and noiseless manner in which the animals come forth at night in search of their prey, or seem to crawl out of their hiding-places—the places where they conceal themselves in the day-time. The idea is, that the arrangements which God has made in regard to day and night are wisely adapted to the animals which he has placed on the earth. The earth is full of animated beings, accomplishing by day and night the purposes of their existence.

21. *The young lions roar after their prey.* This is a continuation of the description in the previous verse. At night the beasts which had been hidden in the day-time crawl forth, and seek their food.

after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

23 Man *f* goeth forth unto his work and to his labour, until the evening.

f Gen. iii. 19.

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom *g* hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

g Prov. iii. 19.

The lion is particularly specified as one of the beasts that in a general survey would attract attention. The psalmist hears his "roar" as he goes forth in the forest in pursuit of his prey. ¶ *And seek their meat from God.* Their food. That is, God bestows it on them, and they act *as if* they sought it at his hand. They seek it where he has placed it; they are dependent on him for it. It is a beautiful idea that even the brute creation act as if they called on God, and sought the supply of their wants at his hands.

22. *The sun ariseth.* A new scene in this endless variety of incidents in a world full of life and beauty. The psalmist sees the light break in the east, and the sun appear above the horizon, — and the whole scene is changed. The animals that had gone forth at night are seen to return again to their hiding-places, and man in *his* turn (ver. 23) is seen to go forth to his daily toil. ¶ *They gather themselves together.* Though scattered in the night, when light returns, they all bend their steps to the places where they are accustomed to repose in the daytime. The scene is most beautiful. At night they sally forth for their prey; when the morning light returns, they all retrace their steps to the places in dens and caverns where they pass the day, and there they repose in silence until night returns again.

23. *Man goeth forth*, etc. Man is now seen to go forth from his dwelling, and he appears on the stage to perform his daily toil, until evening comes, and then again he gives way for the beasts of night. Thus the scene is ever varying,—showing how full of animated existence the earth is; how varied are the occupations of its different inhabitants; and how the varieties of being are adapted to its own varied condition in the alternations of day and night.

24. *O* LORD, *how manifold are thy works!* Literally, *how many.* The reference is to the *number* and the *variety* of the works of God, and to the wisdom displayed in them all. The earth is not fitted up merely for one class of inhabitants, but for an almost endless variety; and the wisdom of God is manifested alike in the number *and* in the variety. No one can estimate the *number* of beings God has made on the earth; no one can comprehend the richness of the variety. By day the air, the earth, the waters swarm with life,—life struggling everywhere as if no place was to be left unoccupied; even for the dark scenes of night countless numbers of beings have been created; and, in all this immensity of numbers, there is an endless variety. No two are alike. Individuality is everywhere preserved, and the mind is astonished and confounded alike at the numbers and the variety. ¶ *In wisdom hast thou made them all.* That is, Thou hast adapted each and all to the different ends contemplated in their creation. Any one of these beings shows the wisdom of God in its formation, and in its adaptations to the ends of its existence; how much more is that wisdom displayed in these countless numbers, and in this endless variety! ¶ *The earth is full of thy riches.* Heb., *possessions.* So the LXX. and the Vulgate. That is, these various objects thus created are regarded as the *possession* of God; or, they *belong* to him, as the property of a man belongs to himself. The psalmist says

25 *So is* this great and wide [h] sea, wherein *are* things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26 There go the ships; *there is* that leviathan, [i] *whom* thou hast [l] made to play therein.

h Ps. xcv. 5. *i* Job xli. 1, etc.

27 These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.

28 *That* thou givest them they gather: thou [k] openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

[l] *formed.* *k* Ps. cxlv. 16.

that this wealth or property abounds everywhere; the earth is full of it.

25. So is *this great and wide sea*, etc. Our translation here does not quite express the beauty and the force of the original;—"This sea! Great and broad of hands! There is the creeping thing,—and there is no number; animals,—the little with the great." The reference here is, undoubtedly to the Mediterranean Sea, which not improbably was in sight when the psalm was composed, —as it is in sight not only along the coast, but from many of the elevations in Palestine. The phrase "wide of hands" applied to the sea, means that it seems to stretch out in all directions. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxiii. 21. The *creeping things* refer to the variety of inhabitants of the deep that glide along *as if* they crept. See Notes on ver. 20. The word *beasts* refers to any of the inhabitants of the deep, and the idea is that there is an endless variety *there*. This reflection cannot but impress itself on the mind of any one when looking on the ocean: What a countless *number*, and what a vast *variety* of inhabitants are there in these waters —all created by God; all provided for by his bounty!

26. *There go the ships.* There the vessels move along — objects that would, of course, attract the attention of one looking at the sea, and admiring its wonders. The psalmist is describing the active scenes on the surface of the globe, and, of course, on looking at the ocean, these would be among the objects that would particularly attract his attention. ¶ There is *that leviathan.* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, *dragon.* On the meaning of the word *leviathan*, see Notes on Job xli. 1. ¶ Whom *thou hast made.* Marg., as in Heb., *formed.* The idea of *creation* is implied in the word. ¶ *To play therein.* As his native element. To move about therein; to make quick and rapid motions, as if in sport.

27. *These wait all upon thee.* That is, These are all dependent on thee. It does not, of course, mean that they "wait" in the sense that they are conscious of their dependence on God, but that they are *actually* dependent. The original word implies the idea of *expecting* or *hoping*, and is so rendered in the Septuagint and Vulgate. They have no other ground of expectation or hope but in thee. ¶ *That thou mayest give* them *their meat in due season.* Their food at the proper time. That is, They are constantly dependent on thee, that thou mayest give them food from day to day. Perhaps there is also the idea that they do not lay up or hoard anything; or that they cannot anticipate their own wants, but must receive from one day to another all that they want directly from God.

28. That *thou givest them they gather.* What thou dost place before them they collect. They have no resources of their own. They can invent nothing; they cannot vary their food by art, as man does; they cannot make use of reason, as man does, or of skill, in preparing it, to suit and pamper the appetite. It comes prepared for them direct from the hand of God. ¶ *Thou openest thine hand.* As one does who bestows a gift on another. The point in the passage is, that they receive it immediately

29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

30 Thou [l] sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.

31 The glory of the LORD shall [1] endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice [m] in his works.

l Gen. ii. 7; Job xxxiii. 4.
1 *be.*
m Gen. i. 31; Isa. lxii. 5.

from God, and that they are wholly dependent on him for it. They have not to labour to prepare it, but it is made ready for them, and they have only to gather it up. The allusion in the *language* may be to the gathering of manna in the wilderness, when it was provided by God, and men had only to collect it for their use. So it is with the brute creation on land and in the waters. ¶ *They are filled with good.* They are *satisfied* with good; that is, They are satisfied with what to them is good, or with what supplies their wants.

29. *Thou hidest thy face.* As if God turned away from them; as if he was displeased with them; as if he withdrew from them the tokens of his friendship and favour. ¶ *They are troubled.* They are confounded; they are overwhelmed with terror and amazement. The word *troubled* by no means conveys the sense of the original word—בָּהַל, *bahal*— which means properly to tremble; to be in trepidation; to be filled with terror; to be amazed; to be confounded. It is that kind of consternation which one has when all support and protection are withdrawn, and when inevitable ruin stares one in the face. So when God turns away, all their support is gone; all their resources fail, *and they must die.* They are represented as conscious of this; or, this is what would occur if they *were* conscious. ¶ *Thou takest away their breath.* Withdrawing that which thou gavest to them. ¶ *They die, and return to their dust.* Life ends when thou dost leave them, and they return again to earth. So it is also with man. When God withdraws from him, nothing remains for him *but to die.*

30. *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created.* That is, New races are created in their place, or start up as if they were created directly by God. They derive their being from him as really as those did which were first formed by his hand, and the work of creation is constantly going on. ¶ *And thou renewest the face of the earth.* The earth is not suffered to become desolate. Though one generation passes off, yet a new one is made in its place, and the face of the earth constantly puts on the aspect of freshness and newness.

31. *The glory of the* LORD *shall endure for ever.* Marg., as in Heb., *shall be.* It might be rendered, "Let the glory of the Lord be for ever," implying a strong desire that it should be so. But the language may denote a strong conviction that it *would* be so. The mind of the writer was filled with wonder at the beauty and variety of the works of God on the land, in the air, and in the waters; and he exclaims, with a heart full of admiration, that the glory of a Being who had made all these things could never cease, but must endure for ever. All the glory of man would pass away; all the monuments that he would rear would be destroyed; all the works of art executed by him must perish; but the glory of One who had made the earth, and filled it with such wonders, could not but endure for ever and ever. ¶ *The* LORD *shall rejoice in his works.* See Gen. i. 31. The idea here is, that God finds pleasure in the contemplation of his own works; in the beauty and order of creation; and in the happiness which he sees as the result of his work of creation. There is no impropriety in supposing that God finds pleasure in the mani-

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; [n] he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.[o]

33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have

n Hab. iii. 10. *o* Ex. xix. 18.

festation of the wisdom, the power, the goodness, the mercy, and the love of his own glorious nature.

32. *He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.* There is great sublimity in this expression, as indicating the power and the majesty of God. He has only to *look* upon his works, and they stand in awe and tremble. The most mighty and fearful convulsions of nature occur *as if* they were the mere effect of God's *looking* on the earth. Comp. Hab. iii. 10,—"The mountains saw thee, and they trembled." ¶ *He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.* That is, as Mount Sinai did when God came down upon it. Ex. xix. 18. It is as if the hills were conscious of his presence, and were awed.

33. *I will sing unto the* LORD *as long as I live.* That is, I will continue to praise him; I will never cease to adore him. The result of the psalmist's meditations on the wonderful works of God is to awaken in his mind a desire to praise God for ever. He is so filled with a sense of his greatness and glory that he sees that there would be occasion for eternal praise; or that the reason for praise could never be exhausted. He who has any proper sense of the greatness, the majesty, and the glory of God *intends* to praise him for ever. He sees that there is enough in the character of God to demand eternal praise, and he does not anticipate that a period can ever occur in all the future when he will feel that the causes for praise have come to an end, or when his heart will be indisposed to celebrate that praise.

34. *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* That is, I will find pleasure in meditating on his character and works.

my being.

34 My [p] meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad [q] in the LORD.

35 Let [r] the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let

p Ps. lxiii. 5, 6. *q* Ps. xxxii. 11. *r* Prov. ii. 22.

See Notes on Ps. i. 2. It is one of the characteristics of true piety that there is a *disposition* to think about God; that the mind is *naturally* drawn to that subject; that it does not turn away from it, when it is suggested; that this fills up the intervals of business in the day-time, and that it occupies the mind when wakeful at night. Ps. lxiii. 6. It is also a characteristic of true piety that there is *pleasure* in such meditations; happiness in thinking of God. The sinner has no such pleasure. The thought of God is painful to him; he does not desire to have it suggested to him; he turns away from it, and avoids it. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxx. 11. It is one of the evidences of true piety when a man *begins* to find pleasure in thinking about God; when the subject, instead of being unpleasant to him, becomes pleasant; when he no longer turns away from it, but is sensible of a desire to cherish the thought of God, and to know more of him. ¶ *I will be glad in the* LORD. That is, I will rejoice that there *is* such a Being; I will seek my happiness *in* him as my God.

35. *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth.* Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 38. This might with propriety be rendered, "Consumed are the sinners out of the earth,"—expressing a *fact* and not a *desire;* and it may have been prompted by the feeling of the psalmist that such an event *would* occur; that is, that the time would come when sin would no more abound, but when the world would be filled with righteousness, and all the dwellers on the earth *would* praise God. The word translated *consumed*—from תָּמַם, *tamam*—means properly to complete, to perfect, to finish, to cease. It

the wicked [s] be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

[s] Ps. i. 4.

does not mean *consume* in the sense of being burned up—as our word means—or destroyed, but merely to come to an end, to cease, to pass away:—that is, Let the time soon come,—or, the time will soon come,—when there will be no sinners on the earth, but when all the inhabitants of the earth will worship and honour God. The *connexion* here seems to be this: The psalmist was himself so filled with the love of God, and with admiration of his works, that he desired that *all* might partake of the same feeling; and he looked forward, therefore, as those who love God must do, to the time when all the dwellers on earth would see his glory, and when there should be none who did not adore and love him. All that is *fairly* implied in the wish of the psalmist here would be accomplished if all sinners were converted, and if, in that sense, there were to be no more transgressors in the world. ¶ *And let the wicked be no more.* Let there not be any more wicked persons; let the time come when there shall be no bad men on the earth, but when all shall be righteous. In this prayer all persons could properly unite. ¶ *Bless thou the* LORD, *O my soul.* The psalm closes (as Ps. ciii. does) as it began. The psalmist commenced with the expression of a purpose to bless God; it closes with the same purpose, confirmed by a survey of the wonderful works of God. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Heb., *Hallelu-jah.* The psalmist expresses the earnest desire of a truly pious heart (in looking upon a world so beautiful, so varied in its works, so full of the expressions of the wisdom and goodness of God—a world where all the inferior creation so completely carries out the purpose of the Creator), that *man*, the noblest of all the works of God, might unite with the world around and beneath him in carrying out the great purpose of the creation,—so that he might, in his own proper place, and according to the powers with which he is endowed, acknowledge God. How beautiful—how sublime—would be the spectacle on earth, if *man* accomplished the purpose of *his* creation, and filled *his* place, as well as the springs, the hills, the trees, the fowls, the wild goats, the moon, the sun, the young lions, and the inhabitants of the "great and wide sea" do in their spheres! Oh, come the time when on earth there shall be harmony in all the works of God, and when all creatures here shall carry out the purpose which was contemplated when God called the earth into existence.

PSALM CV.

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is the occasion on which it was composed. It resembles the seventy-eighth psalm in the fact that both are of an historical nature, recounting the dealings of God with his people in their deliverance from the bondage in Egypt. The object of the former psalm, however, seems to have been *to recall the nation from their sins*, and to vindicate the dealings of God with the Hebrews in his arrangements for their government, or in the change of the administration, by giving the government to the tribe of Judah under David, rather than to Ephraim; the object of this psalm is *to excite the people to gratitude* by the remembrance of the goodness of God to the people in former times. Accordingly this psalm is occupied with recounting the mercies of God—his various acts of intervention in their history—all appealing to the nation to cherish a grateful remembrance of those acts, and to love and praise him.

The first sixteen verses of the psalm are substantially the same as the first part of the psalm composed by David when he brought up the ark, as recorded in 1 Chron. xvi. 8-22. But at that point the resemblance ceases. Probably the author of this psalm found in the one composed by David what was suitable to the occasion on which this was composed, and adopted it without any material change. In the remainder of

PSALM CV.

O *t* GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name; make *u* known his deeds among the people.

t 1 Chron. xvi. 8—22. *u* Isa. xii. 4.

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

the psalm, he has simply carried out in the history of the Jews what was suggested by David in the psalm in 1 Chron. xvi., and has applied the idea to the other events of the Jewish history, as furnishing a ground of praise. The psalm is a mere summary of the principal events of that history to the time when the people entered the promised land,—as laying the foundation of praise to God.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD. The design here is to show that thanks should be given to the Lord in view of his dealings with his people, as stated in the subsequent portions of the psalm. ¶ *Call upon his name.* More literally, "Call him *by* his name;" that is, Address him by his proper title; ascribe to him the attributes which properly belong to him; or, address him in a proper manner. ¶ *Make known his deeds among the people.* What he has done in former times. The allusion is to his acts in behalf of his people in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, and bringing them to the promised land. The word "people" here refers to the Hebrew people; and the exhortation is, that the knowledge of these deeds should be diffused and kept up among them. One of the ways of doing this was that proposed by the psalmist, to wit, by a psalm of praise—by recording and celebrating these acts in their devotions. One of the most effective modes of keeping up the knowledge of what God has done in our world is by songs of praise in worshipping assemblies.

2. *Sing unto him.* Sing before him; offer him praise. ¶ *Sing psalms unto him.* The word here rendered *sing psalms* means properly to *prune*, and then, to *cut off*, as a discourse at regular periods; or, to utter in rhythmical numbers; and then it means to accompany such words with an instrument of music. The idea here is, that he is to be approached, not merely with *singing*, but with sentiments expressed in the form of regular composition—in musical numbers. ¶ *Talk ye.* The word here used very commonly means to meditate, to muse (comp. Notes on Ps. i. 2), but would here seem to be employed in the sense of *talking over*, to wit, in singing. That is, In the psalms used let there be a *narrative* of what God has done. Let his works be the subject of the words used in the psalm. ¶ *Of all his wondrous works.* Of what he has done that is fitted to excite wonder and admiration. Comp. Ps. lxxvii. 12.

3. *Glory ye in his holy name.* The original word rendered *glory* is the same word which is commonly used to denote *praise*, and it has that meaning here. The idea is, In your praises let the main subject be the name of God—that holy name by which he chooses to be known. The Hebrew is, "the name of his holiness." It implies (*a*) that we should rejoice in God—in his very name—in that by which he chooses to make himself known; (*b*) that it is a special subject of praise and rejoicing that his name is *holy*; that is, that he is a holy Being. This can be a subject of real rejoicing only to those who are themselves holy; but properly considered, one of the highest reasons for rejoicing in God is the fact that he *is* holy; that he cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. There would be no ground of confidence in God if this were not so. ¶ *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the* LORD. That desire to know him; that come to praise him. Let their hearts rejoice,—or, let them be happy,—(*a*) because they are *permitted* to

4 Seek [v] the LORD, and his strength; seek [w] his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He *is* the LORD our God; his [x] judgments *are* in all the earth.

8 He [y] hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations:

[v] Amos v. 4, 6. [w] Ps. xxvii. 8. [x] Isa. xxvi. 9. [y] Luke i. 72, 73.

seek him; (*b*) because they are *inclined* to seek him; (*c*) because they have *such* a God to come to,—One so mighty, so holy, so good, so gracious.

4. *Seek the* LORD *and his strength.* Seek strength from him; seek that his strength may be imparted to you; seek him as a Being of almighty power; as One by whom you may be strengthened. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "Seek the Lord, and *be strengthened.*" Strength comes from God, and it is only by his strength that we can be strong; only by our making use of his omnipotence in our own behalf that we can discharge the duties, and bear the trials of this life. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 29–31. ¶ *Seek his face evermore.* His favour. His smiling upon us, his lifting up the light of his countenance, is synonymous with his favour. See Ps. xxiv. 6; xxvii. 8. Comp. Notes on Ps. iv. 6.

5. *Remember his marvellous works,* etc. The works fitted to excite wonder. Call them to remembrance in your psalm; seek the aid of music and song to impress the memory of them deeply on your hearts. ¶ *His wonders.* His miracles. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 43; Isa. viii. 18. ¶ *And the judgments of his mouth.* That is, properly, the judgments which he pronounced on his enemies, and which were followed by their overthrow. The word does not refer here, as it often does, to his statutes or commands.

6. *O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.* All you who are descendants of Abraham and Jacob;—the former being particularly mentioned here because he was the great ancestor of the Hebrew people; the latter, because the events referred to were closely connected with the history of Jacob—with his going down into Egypt, and with the division of the tribes named after his sons. The word rendered "his chosen" would seem in our version to refer to Jacob. In the original, however, it is in the plural number, and must agree with the word rendered *children,*—"Ye chosen sons of Jacob" (comp. ver. 43). So it has been translated in 1 Chron. xvi. 13, "Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones."

7. *He* is *the* LORD *our God.* His name is *Jehovah*—the true God; and this God is ours. See Notes on Ps. xcv. 7. ¶ *His judgments* are *in all the earth.* More properly "*in all the land;*" that is, in every part of the land he is honoured as our God. His institutions are established here; his laws are obeyed here; his worship is celebrated here. No other God is worshipped here; everywhere he is acknowledged as the nation's God.

8. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever.* That is, God has had it constantly in remembrance, or always. Comp. Notes on Luke i. 72. Though the covenant was made long since; though many generations of men have passed by; though great changes have occurred; though many calamities have come upon the nations, yet his ancient covenant and promise have never been forgotten. All his promises have been fulfilled; all ever will be. The "covenant" here referred to is that which was made with Abraham, and through him with the Hebrew

9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, [z] and his oath unto Isaac;[a]

10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob [b] for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant;

11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the [1] lot of your inheritance:

12 When they were *but* a few [c] men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

13 When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people,

14 He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;

z Gen. xvii. 2. *a* Gen. xxvi. 3. *b* Gen. xxviii. 13—15. [1] *cord.* *c* Deut. vii. 7.

people. ¶ *The word* which *he commanded.* The thing which he commanded; that is, *all* which he ordained and appointed. ¶ *To a thousand generations.* Very many generations; or, any number of generations:—that is, always. Comp. Ex. xx. 6. The experience of the people through all the generations of their history has shown that in what he has promised and directed he is unchanging.

9. *Which* covenant *he made with Abraham.* Which he *ratified* with Abraham. Literally, "which he *cut* with Abraham." Gen. xvii. 2–14. Comp. Notes on Ps. l. 5. ¶ *And his oath unto Isaac.* Confirming the promise made to Abraham. See Gen. xxvi. 2–5.

10. *And confirmed the same unto Jacob.* Literally, "caused it to stand;" that is, he made it fast or secure. He renewed it, commanding the same things; making the same promises; and pledging himself for its fulfilment in the same manner. Gen. xxviii. 10–15. ¶ *For a law.* For an established or settled ordinance; for a rule by which future things were to be regulated:—that is, they would occur *according to* that promise, and be conformed to it. It was, as it were, a rule which God prescribed for himself in regard to his own future conduct. ¶ And *to Israel*, etc. Another name for Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 28.

11. *Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan.* Gen. xiii. 14, 15. ¶ *The lot of your inheritance.* Or, that shall *be* the lot of your inheritance;—or, what you shall inherit. The margin is, *the cord.* The Hebrew word—חֶבֶל, *hhebel*—means properly a cord, a rope; and then, a measuring-line. Hence it means a portion *measured out* and assigned to any one as land, Josh. xvii. 14; xix. 9. Comp. Ps. xvi. 6. The meaning is, that the land of Canaan was given by promise to the patriarchs as their lot or portion of the earth; as that which they and their descendants were to possess as their own.

12. *When they were* but *a few men in number.* Literally, "In their being men of number, very little." That is, They could then be easily numbered, and they were so few that they could not take possession of it themselves. This is in contrast with the promise then made to them that they should be in number as the stars, and as the sand on the sea shore. ¶ *And strangers in it.* Foreigners. They were mere sojourners. They did not become incorporated with the people of the land. They did not acquire property there. They were regarded and treated as belonging to a foreign people. See Notes on Heb. xi. 9.

13. *When they went from one nation to another*, etc. Wandered about, as if they had no home and no fixed habitation. See Gen. xii. 6, 9, 10; xiii. 1; xx. 1; xxvi. 1, 17, 22, 23.

14. *He suffered no man to do them wrong.* He protected them as they wandered from place to place, and as they were exposed to dangers. See the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their wanderings, as it is recorded in the book of Genesis.

15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

16 Moreover, [d] he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff [e] of bread.

d Gen. xli. 54. *e* Isa. iii. 1.

17 He [f] sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold [g] for a servant;

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: [1] he was laid in iron;

f Gen. xlv. 5. *g* Gen. xxxix. 1, 20.
[1] *his soul came into.*

¶ *Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes.* That he might protect them; that he might keep them from danger and from sin. See the case of Pharaoh in the time of Abraham, Gen. xii. 17–20, and the case of Abimelech, Gen. xx. 3, 6.

15. Saying, *Touch not mine anointed.* That is, This was the language of his *providence.* It was *as though* God had said this. It is not meant that this was said in so many words, but this is the *poetic* form of representing the dealings of Providence. Comp. Gen. xxvi. 11. The word *anointed* here means that God had, as it were, set them apart to his service, or that they were to him as kings, and priests, and prophets,—sacred men, belonging to God. The *language* is not found in the Old Testament as applied to the patriarchs, but the *idea* is fairly implied there, that they belonged to God as sacred and holy men. ¶ *And do my prophets no harm.* As if God had thus spoken to them, and called them prophets. That is, they belonged to God as a sacred order:—they were separate from other men, and God regarded them as his own.

16. *Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land.* It was not by chance; not by the mere operation of physical laws, but it was because God *ordered* it. The famine here referred to, as the connexion shows, was that which occurred in the time of Jacob, and which was the occasion of the migration into Egypt. There was also a famine in the time of Abraham (Gen. xii. 10); but the design of the psalmist here is to refer to that period of the Jewish history which pertained to their residence in Egypt, and to the dealings of God with the nation when there, as furnishing an occasion for gratitude. Gen. xli; xlii. ¶ *He brake the whole staff of bread.* That which supports life, as a staff does a feeble man. See Notes on Isa. iii. 1.

17. *He sent a man before them.* That is, He so ordered it by his providence that a man — Joseph — *was* sent before the family of Jacob into Egypt, that he might make arrangements for their reception and preservation. The whole matter was *as if* God had sent him, or had commanded him to go. And yet it was brought about as the result of a series of acts of the most wicked character; —by the envy and the hatred of his brethren; by their guilt and hardness of heart in proposing at first to put him to death, and then in their arrangements for selling him to hopeless slavery; by their plan so to dispose of him that their father might never hear of him again, and that they might be troubled with him no more. God did not cause these acts. He did not command them; he did not approve of them. And yet, since they *did* occur, and since Joseph's brethren *were* so wicked, God made use of these things to accomplish his own benevolent purposes, and to carry out his great designs. So he makes use of the passions of wicked men at all times to execute his plans (comp. Notes on Isa. x. 5–7; see also Ps. lxxvi. 10, and Gen. l. 20); and so he *will* do to the end of time. Men are free in their wickedness; but God is equally free in frustrating their schemes, and overruling their designs for the accomplishment of his own purposes. ¶ Who *was sold for a servant.* For a slave; Gen. xxxvii. 28, 36; xxxix. 1.

18. *Whose feet they hurt with fetters.* In Gen. xl. 3, it is said of

19 Until the time that his word came; the word of the LORD tried him.

20 The king [h] sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his [1] substance;

22 To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom.

h Gen. xli. 14, 40.

[1] *possession.*

Joseph that he was "*bound*" in prison. It is not improbable that his *feet* were bound, as this is the usual way of confining prisoners. ¶ *He was laid in iron.* In the prison. The margin is, *his soul came into iron.* The version in the Prayer-Book of the Episcopal Church is, *the iron entered into his soul.* This is a more striking and beautiful rendering, though it may be doubted whether the Hebrew will permit it. De Wette renders it, "In iron lay his body."

19. *Until the time that his word came.* The word, or the communication from God. ¶ *The word of the* LORD *tried him.* That is, tested his skill in interpreting dreams, and his power to disclose the future. Gen. xli. This furnished a *trial* of his ability, and showed that he was truly the favourite of God, and was endowed with wisdom from on high. The word rendered *tried* is that which is commonly applied to metals in testing their genuineness and purity. Comp. Notes on Ps. xii. 6.

20. *The king sent and loosed him.* Released him from prison. Gen. xli. 14. The object was that he might interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. ¶ *The ruler of the people, and let him go free.* Heb., *peoples,* in the plural,—referring either to the fact that there were *many* people in the land, or that Pharaoh ruled over tributary nations as well as over the Egyptians.

21. *He made him lord of his house.* Gen. xli. 40. This implied that the administration of the affairs of the nation was virtually committed to him. ¶ *And ruler of all his substance.* Marg., as in Heb., *possession.* Of all he had. He placed all at his disposal in the affairs of his kingdom.

22. *To bind his princes at pleasure.* Giving him absolute power. The power here referred to was that which was always claimed in despotic governments, and was, and is still, actually practised in Oriental nations. Literally, "to bind his princes *by his soul;*" that is, at his will; or, as he chose. ¶ *And teach his senators wisdom.* This is now an unhappy translation. The word *senator* in fact originally had reference to *age* (see Webster's Dic.), but it is now commonly applied to a body of men entrusted with a share in the administration of government,—usually a higher body in a government,—as the Senate of the United States. As these were usually *aged* men, the word has acquired its present meaning, and is now ordinarily used without reference to age. But there was no such constituted body in the government of Egypt,—for despotism does not admit of such an arrangement. The Hebrew word here means *aged men,* and is employed with reference to those who were connected with the administration, or whom the monarch would consult,—his counsellors. The meaning of the phrase "to teach them wisdom" is, that he would instruct them *what to do;*—literally, he would "make them *wise,*" that is, in reference to the administration. He had the right of commanding them, and directing them in the administration. At the same time, it is doubtless true that Joseph was endowed with practical wisdom in the affairs of government far beyond them, and that in instructing them what to *do,* he actually imparted *wisdom* to them.

23 Israel [i] also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

24 And [k] he increased his people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

26 He sent Moses [l] his servant, *and* Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They shewed his [1] signs [m] among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, [n] and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

i Gen. xlvi. 6, 7. k Ex. i. 7, etc. l Ex. iv. 12, etc.

1 *words of his signs.*
m Ex. vii.—xii. n Ex. x. 21—23

23. *Israel also came into Egypt.* Another name for Jacob; see ver. 10. ¶ *And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.* Not as a permanent abode, but as a temporary arrangement, until the time should come for the people to be removed to the land of promise. See Gen. xlvi. 6. The more literal rendering would be, "Jacob was a stranger—a foreigner—in the land of Ham." On the meaning of the word *Ham*, see Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 51.

24. *And he increased his people greatly*, etc. God caused them to multiply. Ex. i. 7, 9.

25. *He turned their heart to hate his people.* God turned their heart. That is, He so ordered things that they became the enemies of his people, and made it necessary that they should be removed into another land. It is not said that God did this by his direct *power;* or that he *compelled* them to hate his people; or that he in any way interfered with their *will;* or that he regarded this *as a good* in itself; or that he *approved* of it: —but this is said in accordance with the usual representations in the Bible, where God is spoken of as having all things under his control, and where it is constantly affirmed that nothing takes place without his own proper agency and government in the matter. Nothing—not even the human will—free as it is—is independent of God; and not even the worst passions of men are *outside of his plan*, or independent in such a sense that he does not afford the opportunity for their development and display. Comp. Notes on Isa. vi. 10; x. 5–7, 15. ¶ *To deal subtilly.* In a fraudulent, or deceitful manner. See Ex. i. 10.

26. *He sent Moses his servant.* He sent Moses to be his servant in delivering his people; that is, to accomplish the work which he had designed should be done. ¶ And *Aaron whom he had chosen.* Whom he had selected to perform an important work in delivering his people from bondage.

27. *They shewed his signs among them.* Literally, "They placed among them the words of his signs." So the margin. The reference is to the miracles wrought in Egypt in bringing calamities upon the Egyptians to induce them to permit the children of Israel to go out from their bondage. They were the agents in setting these wonders before the Egyptians. The term *words* is employed here—"the words of his signs"—to keep up the idea that it was by the command of God that this was done, or by his word. It was by no power of their own, but only by the authority of God. ¶ *And wonders in the land of Ham.* Miracles. Things fitted to produce astonishment. See ver. 5.

28. *He sent darkness, and made it dark.* Ex. x. 21–23. ¶ *And they rebelled not against his word.* More literally, *his words.* The reference is to Moses and Aaron; and the idea, as expressed here, is that they were obedient to the command of God; that they went and did what he ordered them; that, although he required them to go before a mighty and proud monarch, to denounce against him the vengeance of heaven, and to be the in-

29 He turned their waters [o] into blood, and slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs [p] in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

31 He [q] spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, *and* lice in all their coasts.

32 He gave them [1] hail [r] for rain, *and* flaming fire in their land.

33 He smote their vines also and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

34 He spake, and the locusts [s] came, and caterpillars, and that without number,

35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

36 He smote also all the firstborn [t] in their land, the chief [u] of all their strength.

37 He [v] brought them forth also with silver and gold; and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.

38 Egypt [w] was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them.

o Ex. vii. 20, 21.
q Ex. viii. 17, 24.
r Ex. ix. 23—25.
p Ex. viii. 5, 6.
[1] *their rain hail.*
s Ex. x. 12—14.
t Ex. xii. 29.
v Ex. xii. 35.
u Gen. xlix. 3.
w Ex. xii. 33.

struments of bringing upon the land unspeakably severe judgments, yet they did not shrink from what God commanded them to do. They were true to his appointment, and showed themselves to be faithful messengers of God. Others, however, suppose that this refers to the Egyptians, and that it is to be taken as a question: "And did they not rebel against his word?" The language might bear this, and the translators of the Septuagint seem to have so understood it, for they render it, "And they rebelled against his words." But the most natural construction is that in our common version, and the design is evidently to commend the boldness and the fidelity of Moses and Aaron.

29–36. See an account of these plagues in Ex. vi.–xi. Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 43–51. This is mostly a mere enumeration of the plagues in the order in which they occurred, but without, of course, the details of the circumstances attending them. There are no circumstances mentioned here which require particular explanation.

37. *He brought them forth also with silver and gold.* Which they had begged of the Egyptians. In Ex. xii. 35, it is said, in our translation, that they had "*borrowed*" this gold and silver, together with raiment, of the Egyptians. This is an unhappy translation, as our word *borrow* means to ask anything of another for the purpose of using it for a time, with an implied understanding that it shall be returned, if an article to be used, —or that as much money shall be repaid, if it is money that is borrowed, —and according to this there would have been dishonesty and fraud on the part of the Israelites in *borrowing* these things of the Egyptians, when not intending (as they evidently did not) to return them. The Hebrew word, however, in Ex. xii. 35— שָׁאַל *shaal*—means merely *to ask, to demand, to require, to request, to petition, to beg.* The idea of an obligation to *return* the things, as in our word *borrow*, is not attached to the Hebrew word. ¶ *And* there was *not one feeble* person, etc. Literally, Not one who was lame; or, who halted, or staggered. This, of course, is not necessarily to be understood literally. It is a general description of the capability of the people for travelling, or for war.

38. *Egypt was glad when they departed.* They had suffered so many plagues; the land was so utterly desolate, there was so much sorrow in their dwellings, from the calamities which had come upon them for refusing to let the Israelites go, that at last they were glad to have them de-

39 He [x] spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night.

40 *The people* asked, [y] and he brought quails, [z] and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

41 He [a] opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.

42 For he remembered his holy promise, [b] *and* Abraham his servant.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, *and* his chosen with [1] gladness;

44 And [c] gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

45 That [d] they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. [2] Praise ye the LORD.

[x] Ex. xiii. 21; Neh. ix. 12.
[y] Ps. lxxviii. 18. [z] Ex. xvi. 13, 14.
[a] Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 11; 1 Cor. x. 4.
[b] Gen. xv. 14. [1] *singing*. [c] Jos. xxi. 43.
[d] Deut. iv. 1, 40; vi. 24, 25. [2] *Hallelujah*.

part, and they were willing to aid them that they might get rid of them. This will, in part, account for the fact that they were willing to give them what they asked,—even silver and gold,—if they might thus facilitate their departure. ¶ *For the fear of them fell upon them.* The fear of them, as being under the protection of God; and the fear of the judgments, which must follow if they continued to oppress them.

39. *He spread a cloud for a covering.* See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 14. In Num. x. 34, it is said that "the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day," and from this seems to have been derived the idea of its *covering* them, as if it were a protection from the heat in the desert.

40. The people *asked, and he brought quails.* See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 26–29. ¶ *And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.* Manna, sent down, as it were, from heaven. In Ps. lxxviii. 25, it is called "angels' food." See Notes on that verse.

41. *He opened the rock*, etc. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 15. ¶ *They ran in the dry places* like *a river.* Or, *a river.* They flowed along in the desert,—a river of waters. See Notes on 1 Cor. x. 4.

42. *For he remembered*, etc. He was faithful to his promise made to Abraham, and did not forget his descendants in the hour of need. This is the statement made in vers. 8, 9; and to illustrate and confirm the faithfulness of God, this reference is made to the history of the Hebrew people. See Notes on those verses.

43. *And he brought forth his people with joy.* With joy at their deliverance from bondage, and for his merciful interposition. ¶ And *his chosen with gladness.* Marg., as in Heb., *singing.* See Ex. xv.

44. *And gave them the lands of the heathen.* Of the *nations* of the land of Palestine, according to his promise. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 55. ¶ *And they inherited the labour of the people.* The fruit of their labours. See Deut. vi. 10, 11; Josh. xiii. 7, *et seq.*

45. *That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.* The end —the design—of all this was that they might be an obedient people. This was the purpose of all his interventions in their behalf; and their obligation to obedience was enforced and measured by what he had done. The same is true in regard to his people now. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Heb., Hallelu-jah. See Ps. civ. 35.

PSALM CVI.

The author of this psalm is unknown, and the occasion on which it was composed cannot now be ascertained. It belongs to the same *class* as Psalms lxxviii., and cv., as referring to the ancient history of the Hebrew people, and as deriving lessons of instruction, admonition, gratitude and praise from that history. The cvth Psalm referred to that history particularly as showing the mercy and favour of God to that people, and hence their obligation to love and serve him; this psalm is occupied

PSALM CVI.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. O [e] give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Who [f] can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can shew forth all his praise?

3 Blessed [g] *are* they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth righteousness at all times.[h]

4 Remember [i] me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest*

[1] *Hallelujah.* [e] 1 Chron. xvi. 34. [f] Ps. xl. 5. [g] Ps. xv. 2. [h] Gal. vi. 9. [i] Ps. cxix. 132.

mainly with a confession, drawn from a review of that history, that the nation had *not* been mindful of those mercies, but that they had rebelled against God, and incurred his displeasure. The psalm has a striking resemblance in many respects to the prayer in Daniel ix.; and, like that, is a prayer that God would now interpose and deliver the people as in times that were past. It is *possible* that the psalm may have been composed in the time of the Babylonish captivity (comp. ver. 47), and this is the opinion of Hengstenberg; but it is impossible to demonstrate this with any certainty. It was evidently composed in some period of public calamity, and there is no impropriety in supposing that it *may* have been then.

The psalm consists essentially of three parts:—

I. A brief introduction, setting forth the duty of praising God, and referring to his mercy, and expressing the desire of the author of the psalm that he himself might participate in his mercy, and share the happy lot of the "chosen" of God, vers. 1-5.

II. A reference to the history of the nation, and a confession of their sins in all the periods of their history, and their proneness as a people to disobey God, referring particularly to their history in Egypt, vers. 6-12; in the desert, vers. 13-33; and in the land of Canaan, vers. 34-43.

III. A prayer—founded on the fact that God had often interposed in their behalf—that he would now again interpose, and gather them from among the heathen, that they might again sing his praises, vers. 44-48.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Marg., *Hallelu-jah.* The two Hebrew words mean, *praise ye the Lord.* They are the same words with which the previous psalm closes, and are here designed to indicate the general duty illustrated in the psalm. ¶ *O give thanks unto the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. cv. 1. ¶ *For* he is *good: for his mercy* endureth *for ever.* See Notes on Ps. c. 5, and cvii. 1, where the language in the Hebrew is the same.

2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the* LORD? Who can speak the great things of God? Who can find language which will suitably express what he has done, or which will *come up* in sublimity to his acts? In other words, human language must fall immeasurably short of adequately expressing the praises of Jehovah, or conveying the fulness of what he has wrought. Who has not felt this when he has endeavoured to praise God in a proper manner? Comp. Notes on Ps. xl. 5. ¶ Who *can shew forth all his praise?* Heb., *Cause to be heard.* That is, Language cannot be found which would *cause it to be heard* in a suitable manner.

3. *Blessed* are *they that keep judgment.* They are blessed, for their conduct is right, and it leads to happiness. The Hebrew is, "the keepers of judgment;" that is, they who observe the rules of justice in their conduct, or who are governed by the principles of integrity. ¶ And *he that doeth righteousness at all times.* All who yield obedience to just law—whether a nation or an individual. The psalm is designed to illustrate this *by contrast;* that is, by showing, in the conduct of the Hebrew people, the consequences of *disobedience,* and thus impliedly what would have been, and what always must be, the consequences of the opposite course. Comp. Ps. xv.

4. *Remember me, O* LORD, *with the favour* that thou bearest unto *thy*

unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, [k] that I may rejoice in the gladness [l] of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.[m]

6 We [n] have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

[k] Eph. i. 4. [l] Isa. xxxv. 10; John xvi. 22. [m] Eph. i. 18. [n] Dan. ix. 5.

people. Literally, "Remember me with the favour of thy people." This is the language of the author of the psalm:—a pious ejaculation such as will occur to the mind in recounting what God has done for his church; what are the advantages of being his friends; what blessings of peace, happiness, and joy are connected with true religion. Even the wicked sometimes have this feeling when they look on the happy life, and the peaceful death of the godly. So Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Num. xxiii. 10. ¶ *O visit me with thy salvation.* Come to me with salvation; confer it upon me.

5. *That I may see the good of thy chosen.* Thy chosen people; or, thine elect. That I may possess and enjoy the same favour and happiness which they do. It is implied here that there *are* peculiar favours conferred on them; or, that happiness is found in the friendship of God which is *not* to be found elsewhere. It is a characteristic of true piety to *desire* to make that our own. A truly religious man more desires the happiness which results from being among the "chosen" of God than all that the world can confer. ¶ *That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation.* The happiness found in the *nation* that serves thee. True religion—the favour of God—not only confers happiness on the *individual* who possesses it, but on the *nation* or *people* where it prevails. It is just as much *fitted* to produce happiness there, and is just as *necessary* for happiness there, as in the case of an individual. ¶ *That I may glory with thine inheritance.* That I may share the honour of thy people. The word *inheritance* here is used to denote that which is one's own, and is thus applied to the people of God considered as *his.* The meaning is, that the psalmist desired no other glory, honour, or distinction, than that which pertained to God's people as such. He sought not the "glory" connected with the distinctions of the world; the display of wealth; the triumph of genius, of conquest, of arms,—but the "glory" of being a friend of God, and of partaking of that which God confers on his people.

6. *We have sinned with our fathers.* We have sinned as *they* did; we have followed their example. The illustration of the manner in which the nation had sinned occupies a considerable part of the remainder of the psalm; and the idea here is, that, in the generation in which the psalmist lived, there had been the manifestation of the same rebellious spirit which had so remarkably characterised the entire nation. The *connexion* of this with the foregoing verses is not very apparent. It would seem to be that the psalmist was deeply impressed with a sense of the great blessings which follow from the friendship of God, and from keeping his commandments,—as stated, vers. 3–5; but he remembered that those blessings had *not* come upon the people as might have been expected, and his mind suddenly adverts to the *cause* of this, in the fact that the nation had *sinned.* It was not that God was not disposed to bestow that happiness; it was not that true religion *failed* to confer happiness; but it was that the nation had provoked God to displeasure, and that in fact the sins of the people had averted the blessings which would otherwise have come upon them. The psalmist, therefore, in

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but [o] provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.

8 Nevertheless, he saved them for [p] his name's sake, that [q] he might make his mighty power to be known.

9 He [r] rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

[o] Ex. xiv. 11, 12. [p] Ez. xx. 14. [q] Ex. ix. 16. [r] Ex. xiv. 21, etc.

emphatic language, — repeating the confession in three forms, "we have sinned,—we have committed iniquity, —we have done wickedly,"—acknowledges that the failure was in them, not in God. The language here is substantially the same as in Daniel ix. 5, 6, and it would seem not improbable that the one was suggested by the other. Which was prior in the order of time, it is now impossible to determine. Comp. Notes on Dan. ix. 5, 6.

7. *Our fathers understood not.* They did not fully comprehend the design of the Divine dealings. They did not perceive the greatness of the favour shown to them, or the obligation to obey and serve God under which they were placed by these remarkable manifestations. ¶ *Thy wonders in Egypt.* The miracles wrought there in behalf of the Hebrew people. ¶ *They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.* The great number of the Divine interpositions in their behalf. They did not allow them to influence their conduct as they should have done. The aggravation of their offence in the case here referred to was particularly in the *multitude* of the mercies. It would have been sinful to have forgotten even *one* act of the Divine favour; it was a great aggravation of their guilt that *so many* acts were forgotten, or that they failed to make an impression on them. So now. It is a great sin to be unmindful of a *single* favour conferred by God; it is a great aggravation of guilt that men live continually amidst so many proofs of the Divine goodness; that they are fed, and clothed, and protected; that they breathe the pure air, and look upon the light of the sun; that they enjoy the comforts of domestic life, the blessings of liberty, and the offers of salvation; that they lie down and rise up; that their toils are crowned with success, and that the blessings of every land are made to come around them,—and yet *they forget or disregard all these proofs of the Divine mercy.* ¶ *But provoked* him *at the sea,* even *at the Red Sea.* Ex. xiv. 10–12. They *rebelled* against him. Even amidst the wonders there occurring, and after all the blessings which they had received at his hands, when they were in danger they doubted his power, and called in question his faithfulness.

8. *Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake.* For the promotion of his own honour and glory; that it might be seen that he is powerful and merciful. This is constantly given as the reason why God saves men; why he forgives sin; why he redeems the soul; why he delivers from danger and from death. Comp. Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32; Isa. xxxvii. 35; xliii. 25; xlviii. 9; Jer. xiv. 7; Ps. vi. 4; xxiii. 3; xxv. 11; xxxi. 16; xliv. 26. This is the highest reason which can be assigned for pardoning and saving sinners. ¶ *That he might make his mighty power to be known.* Ex. ix. 16. Comp. Notes on Rom. ix. 17.

9. *He rebuked the Red Sea also.* The word rendered *rebuke* commonly means to chide—as when one is angry with another for having done wrong. Here it is evidently a poetic term, meaning that he spake *as if* he were angry; or *as if* the Red Sea did wrong in presenting an obstacle or obstruction to the passage of his people. Comp. Ex. xiv. 21, 22. ¶ *So*

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 And [s] the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

12 Then believed they his words; they sang [t] his praise.

[s] Ex. xv. 5. [t] Ex. xv. 1, etc.

13 They [1] soon forgat [u] his works; they waited not for his counsel;

14 But [2] lusted [v] exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness [w] into their soul.

[1] *made haste, they forgat.* [u] Ex. xv.—xvii.
[2] *lusted a lust* [v] Num. xi. 4, 33; Ps. lxxviii. 18. [w] Isa. x. 16.

he led them through the depths. Through what *had* been the abyss; what had *seemed* to be depths, being covered with water. ¶ *As through the wilderness.* As through a desert or dry place; as he afterwards led them through the wilderness. The waters parted asunder, and made a way for them.

10. *And he saved them from the hand of him that hated* them. From Pharaoh. By making a path through the waters, they were enabled to escape; by the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, they were completely and for ever delivered from their oppressors. Ex. xiv. 30.

11. *And the waters covered their enemies,* etc. Ex. xiv. 27, 28; xv. 5.

12. *Then believed they his words.* In immediate view of his interpositions in their behalf in conducting them through the Red Sea, and in the destruction of their enemies. ¶ *They sang his praise.* In the song composed by Moses on the occasion of their deliverance. Ex. xv.

13. *They soon forgat his works.* On vers. 13–15, see Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 17–22. Literally here, as in the margin, *They made haste, they forgat.* They did it soon; did it without any delay. It was as if they were impatient to have it done. ¶ *They waited not for his counsel.* For the fulfilment of his promise; or for his command in regard to their future conduct. They did not look to him, but they depended on themselves, and followed their own desires and wishes.

14. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.* Marg., as in Heb., *lusted a lust.* The reference is to their desire of better food than the manna. ¶ *And tempted God in the desert.* Tried God, whether he *could* provide for them food and drink. Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20.

15. *And he gave them their request.* By sending great quantities of *quails.* Num. xi. 31, 32. ¶ *But sent leanness into their soul.* The word translated *leanness* is from a verb—רָזָה, *razah*—to make thin; to cause to waste away; to destroy. The radical idea is that of abrading or *scraping;* and hence it means to become lean, to waste away. It occurs only here and in Isa. x. 16, rendered *leanness,* and in Micah vi. 10, rendered *scant;* marg., *leanness.* It means here that the effect of all this on their souls was similar to the effect on the body when it wastes away by disease or want of food. This effect often occurs. In the gratification of their desires, in great temporal success and prosperity, individuals, churches, nations, often forget their dependence on God; lose their sense of the value of spiritual privileges and blessings: are satisfied with their condition; become self-confident and proud, and forfeit the favour of God. If we pray for temporal prosperity, we should also pray that we may at the same time have grace commensurate with it, that it may be a blessing and not a curse; if we are visited with prosperity when it has not been a direct object of our prayer,—if we inherit riches, or if our plans are successful beyond our expectations—or, in the

16 They [x] envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD.

17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

19 They made a calf [y] in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

20 Thus [z] they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

21 They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea.

x Num. xvi. 1, etc. y Ex. xxxii. 4. z Jer. ii. 11.

language of the world, if "fortune smiles upon us," there should be special prayer on our part that it may not be a curse rather than a blessing; —that it may be so received and used as *not* to alienate our minds from God. Few are the Christian men who can bear continued success in life; few are those who are not injured by it; rare is it that growth in grace keeps pace with uninterrupted worldly prosperity; rare is it that the blessings of earth are so received and employed that they are seen to be a means of grace, and not a hindrance to growth in piety. A man does not know what is best for him when his heart is set on worldly prosperity; and God is more benevolent to men than they are to themselves, in withholding what is so often the object of their intense desire. "What is asked in passion, is often given in wrath."—*Henry.*

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp.* They were envious of him, or rebelled against him, as assuming too much authority. See Num. xvi. 1, 2. The reference here is rather to the *result* of that envy in producing rebellion than to the envy itself. It is true, however, that the foundation of their opposition to him *was* envy. ¶ And *Aaron the saint of the* LORD. That is, as set apart to the service of the Lord; or, as employed in holy things. The reference is to his *office*, not to his personal character.

17, 18. On these verses see Num. xvi. 31–35. This refers to the time when they rebelled against Moses.

19. *They made a calf in Horeb.* Ex. xxxii. 4. Probably in resemblance of the Egyptian god *Apis.* The image was made by Aaron out of materials furnished by the people, and at their request (Ex. xxxii. 1–3), so that it might be said to be the act of the people. ¶ *And worshipped the molten image.* The word rendered *molten* is from a verb—נָסַךְ, *nasach*—to pour, to pour out; hence, to cast, to found; and it means any thing that is made by fusion or casting. This image was *cast* (Ex. xxxii. 4), and hence this name is given to it.

20. *Thus they changed their glory.* Their true glory,—the proper object of worship—God. Comp. Notes on Rom. i. 23. They *exchanged* that as an object of worship for the image of an ox. ¶ *Into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.* Into the likeness of an ox. That is, They worshipped God under that image. The circumstance of its "eating grass" is added to show the absurdity of the act. Instead of worshipping God—an independent Being, who does not need to be supported, but who himself sustains all things, and provides for all—they worshipped an animal that had need of constant sustenance, and would itself soon die if deprived of its proper nourishment. Comp. Notes on Isa. xl. 18–20; xli. 6, 7.

21, 22. *They forgat God their Saviour,* etc. The God who had saved, or delivered them, out of Egypt. The sentiment here is the same as in Ps. lxxviii. 11, 12. See Notes on that place.

23 Therefore [a] he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.

24 Yea, they despised [1] the pleasant land; [b] they believed not his word;

25 But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD:

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

[a] Ez. xx. 13. [1] *a land of desire.* [b] Deut. viii. 7.

23. *Therefore he said that he would destroy them.* See Ex. xxxii. 10–14. He threatened to destroy them, and he would have done it, if Moses had not interposed and pleaded for them. There was nothing strange or very unusual in this. Many a descending curse on guilty men is turned away by prayer, and by human intervention. We are constantly endeavouring to turn aside evils which would come upon others—by our intervention—by labour or by prayer. Thus, when we toil to provide food for our children, or give it in charity to the poor, we are endeavouring to avert the evil of starvation which would otherwise come upon them; when we provide for them clothing, we turn away the evils of nakedness and cold; when we give them medicine we turn away the evil of long-continued disease or of death; when we rush through the flames if a house is on fire, or venture out in a rough sea in a boat, to save others from devouring flame or from a watery grave, we seek to turn aside evils which would otherwise come upon them. So when we pray for others we *may* turn away evils which would otherwise descend on the guilty. No one can estimate the number or the amount of evils which are thus turned away from the guilty and the suffering by intervention and intercession; no one can tell how many of the blessings of his own life he owes to the intercessions and the toils of others. *All* the blessings that come upon sinners,—*all* that is done to turn away deserved wrath from men,—is owing to the fact that the one great Intercessor—greater than Moses—cast himself into the "breach," and himself met and rolled back the woes which were coming upon a guilty world. ¶ *Had not Moses his chosen.* Chosen to lead and guide his people to the promised land. ¶ *Stood before him.* Presented himself before him. ¶ *In the breach.* Literally, *in the breaking.* The allusion is to a breach made in a wall (1 Kings xi. 27; Isa. xxx. 13; Amos iv. 3; Job xxx. 14), and to the force with which an army rushes through a breach that is thus made. So God seemed to be about to come forth to destroy the nation.

24. *Yea, they despised the pleasant land.* Marg., as in Heb., *land of desire.* That is, a country *to be* desired,—a country whose situation, climate, productions, made it desirable as a place of abode. Such Palestine was always represented to be to the children of Israel (Lev. xx. 24; Num. xiii. 27; xiv. 8; xvi. 14; Deut. vi. 3; xi. 9, *et al.*;) but this land had to them, at the time here referred to, no attractions, and they rather desired to return again to Egypt; Num. xi. 5. ¶ *They believed not his word.* His assurance in regard to the land to which they were going.

25. *But murmured in their tents,* etc. Num. xiv. 2, 27. They complained of Moses; they complained of their food; they complained of the hardships of their journey; they complained of God. They did this when "in their tents;" when they had a comfortable home; when safe; when provided for; when under the direct Divine protection and care. So men often complain: perhaps oftener when they have *many* comforts than when they have *few*.

26. *Therefore he lifted up his hand*

27 To [1] overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

28 They [c] joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions; and the plague brake in upon them.

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and *so* the plague was stayed.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness, unto all generations for evermore.

[1] *make them fall.* [c] Num. xxv. 2, etc.

against them. Num. xiv. 27–33. He resolved to cut them off, so that none of them should reach the promised land. ¶ *To overthrow them in the wilderness.* Literally, *to cause them to fall.*

27. *To overthrow their seed also among the nations.* Marg., as in Heb., *to make them fall;* to wit, among the surrounding people. The reference here is to the posterity of those who murmured and fell in the wilderness. The result of their rebellion and murmuring would not terminate with them. It would extend to their posterity, and the rebellion of the fathers would be remembered in distant generations. The overthrow of the nation, and its captivity in Babylon was thus one of the remote consequences of their rebellion in the wilderness. ¶ *And to scatter them in the lands.* In foreign lands—as at Babylon. If this psalm was written at the time of the Babylonish captivity, this allusion would be most appropriate. It would remind the nation that its captivity there had its origin in the ancient and long-continued disposition of the people to revolt from God.

28. *They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor.* They joined in their devotions, or, they shared in the rites of idolatrous worship. This occurred when they were in the regions of Moab, and on the very borders of the promised land. Num. xxv. Many other instances of a similar kind are passed over by the psalmist, and this seems to have been selected because of its peculiar aggravation, and to show the general character of the nation. Even after their long-continued enjoyment of the favour and protection of God,—after he had conducted them safely through the wilderness,—after he had brought them to the very border of the land of Canaan, and all his promises were about to be fulfilled, they still showed a disposition to depart from God. Baal-peor was an idol of the Moabites, in whose worship females prostituted themselves. Gesenius, *Lex.* Comp. Num. xxv. 1–3. Baal was the name of the idol; Peor was the name of a mountain in Moab, where the idol was worshipped. ¶ *And ate the sacrifices of the dead.* Of false gods, represented as *dead* or having no life, in contradistinction from the true and *living* God. They ate the sacrifices offered to those idols; that is, they participated in their worship. Num. xxv. 2.

29. *Thus they provoked* him *to anger with their inventions.* The word rendered *inventions* means properly *works; deeds;* then it is used in the sense of *evil* deeds, crimes. ¶ *And the plague brake in upon them.* See Num. xxv. 8, 9. No less than twenty-four thousand fell in the plague. Num. xxv. 9.

30. *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment,* etc. Inflicted summary punishment upon a principal offender. Num. xxv. 7, 8.

31. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness.* See Num. xxv. 11–13. Comp. Notes on Rom. iv. 3. The meaning here is, that this was regarded as a *proof* or *demonstration* that he was a righteous man—a man fearing God. ¶ *Unto all generations for evermore.* Heb., "To generation and generation for ever." The record would be transmitted from one generation to another, without any intermission, and would be perma-

32 They [d] angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

34 They [e] did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

d Num. xx. 3, etc. *e* Judges i. 21, etc.

nent. This is one of the illustrations of the statement so frequently made in the Scriptures (comp. Ex. xx. 6; Deut. vii. 9; Rom. xi. 28) that the blessings of religion will descend to a distant posterity. Such instances are constantly occurring, and there is no legacy which a man can leave his family so valuable as the fact that he himself fears God and keeps his laws.

32. *They angered* him *also at the waters of strife.* Num. xx. 3–13. They complained of the want of water. They wished that they had died as others had done. They murmured against God as if he could *not* supply their wants. They showed an unbelieving and rebellious spirit,—provoking God, and tempting Moses to an act of great impatience by their conduct. In Num. xx. 13, this is, "the waters of *Meribah;*"—marg., *strife.* This is the meaning of the Hebrew word. The place took its name from the fact that the people there *strove* against the Lord and against Moses. ¶ *So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.* Evil came upon him. He was betrayed into impatience, and was tempted to use words which offended God, and prevented his being permitted to lead the people into the promised land. Num. xx. 12.

33. *Because they provoked his spirit.* Literally, "They made his spirit *bitter,*" or they embittered his soul. They threw him off his guard, so that instead of manifesting the meekness and gentleness which so eminently characterised him in general (see Num. xii. 3), he gave way to expressions of anger. See Num. xx. 10. ¶ *So that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.* Passionately; in a severe, harsh, and threatening manner. He did not bear with them as he should have done; he did not refer to God, to his power, and to his goodness as he should have done; he spake as if the whole thing depended on him and Aaron:—"Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" The word rendered "spake unadvisedly"—בָּטָא, *bata*—means properly *to babble;* and then, to talk idly, or unadvisedly; to utter that which has no meaning, or an improper meaning. Let us not harshly blame Moses, till we are placed in circumstances similar to his, and see how we would ourselves act. Who is there that would *not* have been provoked as he was, or even to a greater degree? If there *are* any such, let them "cast the first stone."

34. *They did not destroy the nations.* The Canaanites, Hivites, Jebusites, etc.;—the nations that inhabited the land of Canaan. ¶ *Concerning whom the* LORD *commanded them.* The command on this subject was positive; and it was to destroy them, to spare none of them. Num. xxxiii. 52; Deut. vii. 5, 16.

35. *But were mingled among the heathen.* Among the nations; by intermarriage, and by commerce. They suffered them to remain in the land, contrary to the command of God, and thus greatly exposed and endangered the purity of their religion and their own morals. See Judges ii. 2; iii. 5, 6. ¶ *And learned their works.* Their practices; their customs and habits:—learned to live as they did. This was an illustration of the danger of intercourse with the wicked and the worldly. What occurred in their case has often occurred since in the history of the people of God, that by

36 And *f* they served their idols; which were a snare unto them.

37 Yea, they sacrificed *g* their sons and their daughters unto devils,

38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land *h* was polluted with blood.

39 Thus were they defiled *i* with their own works, and went a whoring *k* with their own inventions.

f Judges ii. 3, etc. *g* Ez. xvi. 20.
h Num. xxxv. 33.
i Ez. xx. 18.
k Lev. xvii. 7; Jer. iii. 6—9.

"mingling" with the world they have learned to practise their "works;" have become conformed to their manner of living, and have thus lost their spirituality, and brought dishonour on the cause of religion. There is some proper sense in which the people of God are *not* to be conformed to the world; in which, though living among them, they are to be separate from them; in which, though they are parts of the same nation, and live under the same government and laws, they are to be a distinct and peculiar people, ruled supremely by higher laws, and having higher and nobler ends of life. Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 14–17.

36. *And they served their idols.* Judges ii. 12, 13, 17, 19; iii. 6, 7. ¶ *Which were a snare unto them.* Like the snares or toils by which birds and wild beasts are caught. That is, they were taken unawares; they were in danger when they did not perceive it; they fell when they thought themselves safe. The bird and the wild beast approach the snare, unconscious of danger; so the friend of God approaches the temptations which are spread out before him by the enemy of souls,—and, ere he is aware, he is a captive, and has fallen. Nothing could better describe the way in which the people of God are led into sin than the arts by which birds are caught by the fowler, and wild beasts by the hunter.

37. *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters.* See 2 Kings xvi. 3; Ezek. xvi. 20; xx. 31; Isa. lvii. 5. ¶ *Unto devils.* Heb., שֵׁדִים *shaidim.* The Septuagint, δαιμονίοις, *demons.* So the Vulgate, *dæmoniis.* The word is used only in the plural number, and is applied to idols. It occurs only in this place, and in Deut. xxxii. 17. On the meaning of this, see Notes on 1 Cor. x. 20.

38. *And shed innocent blood,* etc. The blood of those who had committed no crime; who did not *deserve* the treatment which they received. That is, they were sacrificed *as* innocent persons, and *because* it was believed that they *were* innocent:—the pure for the impure; the holy for the unholy. It was on the general principle that a sacrifice for sin must be itself pure, or it could not be offered in the place of the guilty; that an offering made for one who had violated law must be by one who had *not* violated it. This was the principle on which *lambs* were offered in sacrifice. It is on this principle that the atonement for sin by the Lord Jesus was made; on this depend its efficacy and its value. ¶ *And the land was polluted with blood.* That is, Either so much blood was thus poured out, that it might be said that the very land was polluted with it; or, the sin itself was so great, that it seemed to defile and pollute the whole land.

39. *Thus were they defiled with their own works.* By their very attempts to deliver themselves from sin. They were corrupt, and the consciousness that they were sinners led them to the commission of even greater enormities in attempting to expiate their guilt, even by the sacrifice of their own sons and daughters. Thus all the religions of the heathen begin in sin, and end in sin. The consciousness of sin

40 Therefore [l] was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred [m] his own inheritance.

41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.

42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were [1] brought low for their iniquity.

l Judges ii. 14, etc.; Neh. ix. 27, etc.; Ps. lxxviii. 59.

m Lam. ii. 7.

[1] Or, *impoverished*, or, *weakened*.

only leads to the commission of greater sin; to all the abominations of idol-worship; to the sacrifice—the murder—of the innocent, with the vain hope of thus making expiation for their crimes. Sinners have never yet been able to devise a way by which they may make themselves pure. It is only the great Sacrifice made on the cross which meets the case; which provides expiation; and which saves from future sin. ¶ *And went a whoring.* Apostacy from God and backsliding are often illustrated in the Scriptures by the violation of the marriage compact, as the relation between God and his people is often compared with the relation between a husband and wife. Comp. Isa. lxii. 5; Jer. iii. 14; vii. 9; xiii. 27; Ezek. xvi. 20, 22, 25, 33, 34; xxiii. 17. ¶ *With their own inventions.* More literally, With their own *works.* See Notes on ver. 29.

40. *Therefore was the wrath of the* LORD *kindled against his people.* Anger is often compared with a fire; as we say now, a man is *inflamed* with passion. See Esther i. 12; Lam. ii. 3; Ps. lxxix. 5; lxxxix. 46; Jer. iv. 4; Judges ii. 14. Of course, this must be taken in a manner appropriate to God. It means that his treatment of his offending people was *as if* he were burning with wrath against them. ¶ *Insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.* He was offended with his people; he treated them *as if* they were an abomination to him. He punished them; he cast them off; he left them to the just results of their own conduct. Were ever any writers more candid and honest than the sacred penmen? There is no effort to vindicate the nation; there is no apology offered for them; there is no concealment of their guilt; there is no attempt to soften the statement in regard to the feelings of God towards them. Their conduct *was* abominable; they deserved the Divine displeasure; they were ungrateful, evil, and rebellious; and the sacred writers do not hesitate to admit the truth of this to the fullest extent.

41. *And he gave them into the hand of the heathen.* That is, of foreign nations. They were indeed *heathens*, in the sense in which that term is used now,—that is, they were ignorant of the true God, and worshipped idols; but that idea is not necessarily in the original word. The word *Gentiles* expresses all that the word implies. ¶ *And they that hated them ruled over them.* Had them in subjection.

42. *Their enemies also oppressed them.* Sept., *Afflicted them.* They invaded their country; they destroyed their vintages; they laid desolate their land; they made them captives. ¶ *And they were brought into subjection.* Heb., made to bow.

43. *Many times did he deliver them.* From danger of invasion; from foreign arms; from entire overthrow. Numerous instances of this are recorded in the history of the Hebrew people. ¶ *But they provoked* him *with their counsel.* This does not mean that they gave counsel or advice to God; but it refers to the counsel which they took among themselves; the plans which they formed. These were such as to offend God. ¶ *And were*

44 Nevertheless, [n] he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:

45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

46 He made them also to be pitied [o] of all those that carried them captives.

[n] Lev. xxvi. 40—42.

[o] Ezra ix. 9.

brought low for their iniquity. Marg., *impoverished* or *weakened.* The Hebrew word means to melt away, to pine; and hence to decay, to be brought low. See Job xxiv. 24, where it is rendered *brought low*, and Eccl. x. 18, where it is rendered *decayeth.* The word does not occur elsewhere. The meaning is, that they were weakened; their national strength was exhausted as a punishment for their sins.

44. *Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction.* Literally, "And he looked upon the trouble that was upon them;" or, "and he saw in the distress to them." The meaning is, that he did not turn away from it; he saw the need of interposition, and he came to them. ¶ *When he heard their cry.* Literally, "In his hearing their cry." Their cry for help came before him, and he did not refuse to look upon their affliction. The idea is, that he was attracted to their case *by* their loud cry for help; and that when he heard the cry, he did not refuse to look upon their low and sad condition. God assists us *when* we cry to him. We ask his attention to our troubles; we pray for his help; and *when* he hears the cry, he comes and saves us. He does not turn away, or treat our case as unworthy of his notice.

45. *And he remembered for them his covenant.* His solemn promises made to their fathers. He remembered that covenant in their behalf; or, on account of that, he came and blessed them. He had made gracious promises to the patriarchs; he had promised to be the God of their posterity; he had his own great purposes to accomplish through their nation in the distant future; and on these accounts, he came and blessed them. ¶ *And repented.* He averted impending judgments. He checked and arrested the calamities which he was bringing upon them for their sins. He acted towards them *as though* his mind had been changed; *as though* he was sorry for what he was doing. The word *repent* can be applied to God in no other sense than this. It cannot be applied to him in the sense that he felt or admitted that he had done wrong; or that he had made a mistake; or that he had changed his mind or purposes; or that he intended to enter on a new course of conduct; but it may be applied to him in the sense that his treatment of men is *as if* he had changed his mind, or *as if* he were sorry for what he had done:—that is, a certain course of things which had been commenced, would be arrested and changed to meet existing circumstances, because *they* had changed,—though all must have been foreseen and purposed in his eternal counsels. ¶ *According to the multitude of his mercies.* The greatness of his mercy; the disposition of his nature to show mercy; the repeated instances in which he had shown mercy in similar circumstances.

46. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.* That is, he exercised such control over the minds of the heathen that they were willing to show them mercy and to release them. It was not by any native tenderness on the part of the heathen; it was not because they were disposed of themselves to show them any favour; it was not because they had any *natural* relentings on the subject; but it was because *God* had access to their hearts, and *inclined* them to show compassion for their suffering prisoners. This is a remarkable instance of the

47 Save[p] us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise.

48 Blessed[q] *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. [1] Praise ye the LORD.

[p] 1 Chron. xvi. 35. [q] Ps. xli. 13.

[1] *Hallelujah.*

power of God over even the hardened minds and hearts of heathen men; and it shows that he holds this power, and can exercise it when he pleases. If he could excite in their hard hearts feelings of compassion towards his own people in bondage, what should prevent his having such access to the hearts of the heathen now as to lead them to repentance towards himself? On the exercise of this power the salvation of the heathen world—as of all sinners—must depend; and for the putting forth of this power we should most fervently pray. The *literal* rendering of this verse would be, "And he gave them to compassions before all those that made them captive." That is, he inclined them to show favour or compassion. Comp. Dan. i. 9; 1 Kings viii. 50.

47. *Save us, O* LORD *our God, and gather us from among the heathen.* From among the nations. From this it would seem that the psalm was composed when the nation was in captivity, or was dispersed among the nations that were hostile to them. The prayer is, that as God had, in former periods, recovered his people when they were in exile, or were scattered abroad, he would again graciously interpose and bring them to the land of their fathers, where they had been accustomed to worship God. ¶ *To give thanks unto thy holy name.* Unto thee; a holy God. That we may praise thee in the place where thou art accustomed to be worshipped—in the sanctuary. ¶ And *to triumph in thy praise.* To exult; to rejoice; to be glad in praising thee,—in thy worship.

48. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.* For ever. As he has been adored in the past—even from the beginning of the creation—so let him be adored and praised in all periods to come—for ever and for ever. See Notes on Ps. xli. 13. ¶ *And let all the people say, Amen.* In Ps. xli. 13, this is, "Amen and amen." The idea is, Let all the people join in this; let them all express and declare their assent to this:—let them all say, "Be it so." The word *Amen* is a word expressing assent — meaning *verily, truly, certainly.* ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Heb., *Hallelu-jah.* See Ps. civ. 35.

PSALM CVII.

This psalm is without a title, and its author is unknown. The occasion on which it was composed is not particularly designated, though from vers. 2, 3, it is probable that it was on a return from exile or captivity. There is nothing in the psalm to forbid the supposition that this was the return from the captivity at Babylon, and that the psalm was designed to be used at the re-dedication of the temple after the restoration. Every part of it would be appropriate to such an occasion, and it is every way probable that so important an event would be celebrated with appropriate songs of praise.

The *design* of the psalm, so far as it has a practical bearing, is indicated in vers. 8, 15, 21, 31, in the language repeated in those verses:—"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" The purpose of the psalm is so to set forth these "works," or these *doings* of God, as to lead men to praise and adoration.

The psalm is very regular in its structure. The first three verses are introductory, intended to designate the people who were specially called on to praise God,—as those who had been redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands—east, west, north, and south.

PSALM CVII.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good; [r] for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

r Ps. cxix. 68; Matt. xix. 17.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed [s] from the hand of the enemy;

s Ps. cvi. 10.

The remainder of the psalm is divided into portions marked by the above words, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness," etc., vers. 8, 15, 21, 31. These portions are of unequal length, and this language (with a few appropriate words added) is placed *at the close of each part*, as being that which was suggested by the previous thoughts. In the closing portion, however, (vers. 32–43,) this language is not employed, but the expression of *desire* in the other cases is changed into an *affirmation* that all who were wise *would* "observe these things," and *would* "understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

The particular parts of the psalm are the following:—

I. A reference to the redeemed of the Lord as having wandered in the wilderness; as having been hungry and thirsty; as having no city to dwell in; and then, as calling upon the Lord in such a manner that he heard them, and led them in a right and safe way. For *this* the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," vers. 4-9.

II. A reference to God as displaying goodness towards those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and who are bound in affliction and iron:—illustrated by a reference to the people of God in the times of bondage, as being cast down and punished for their sins, and as then calling upon the Lord in their trouble, so that he brought them out of that darkness and shadow of death, and brake their bands asunder. For *this* the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," vers. 10–16.

III. A reference to the deliverance wrought for the people of God. They had sinned; they had shown their folly; they had drawn near to the gates of death, and then they cried unto the Lord, and he sent his word and healed them. For *this* the psalmist expresses the desire that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," vers. 17–22.

IV. A reference to the goodness of the Lord as manifested towards those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters. They see the wonders of the Lord in the deep. They encounter storms and tempests. They are raised up to the heavens on the waves, and then sink to a corresponding depth. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunkard; and then they cry to the Lord, and he hears them, and makes the sea calm, and brings them to the desired haven. For *this* the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," vers. 23–32.

V. A reference to the goodness of the Lord in preparing a place for men to dwell in:—turning rivers into a wilderness, the water-springs into dry ground, the wilderness into standing water, and the dry ground into water-springs:—making arrangements for men to dwell upon the earth, so that they may sow the fields and plant vineyards—setting the poor on high from affliction, and making them families like a flock. In reference to *this*, and to *all* that God does, the psalmist says, in the conclusion of the psalm, that all who are "wise, and will observe these things, shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," vers. 33–43.

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, *for* he is *good.* See Notes on Ps. cvi. 1. ¶ *For his mercy* endureth *for ever.* He is unchanging in his mercy. It is an attribute of his very nature. He is constantly manifesting it. The word rendered *mercy* here, however—חֶסֶד, *hhesed*—is more general in its signification than our word *mercy.* Our word means *favour shown to the guilty;* the Hebrew word means kindness, goodness, benignity in general. It is this which is celebrated in the psalm before us.

2. *Let the redeemed of the* LORD *say* so. They are peculiarly qualified to say so; they have special occasion to say so; they can and will appreciate this trait in his character. The word rendered *redeemed* here—from

3 And gathered [t] them out of the lands from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the [1] south.

t Isa. xliii. 5, 6; Ez. xxxix. 25, etc.
[1] *sea.*

4 They wandered in the wilderness [u] in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

u Deut. xxxii. 10.

גָּאַל, *gaal*—means *delivered, rescued,* without reference to any price paid for the deliverance. It refers here not to a ransom from *sin,* but to deliverance from *danger.* The probable allusion is to the deliverance from the captivity in Babylon. Comp. Notes on Isa. xliii. 3. ¶ *Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* The power of the enemy. That is, He has saved them from their enemies, and has not suffered them to be destroyed by them. What is here said is true in the most eminent sense of those who are redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and who are made heirs of salvation. Every consideration makes it proper that *they* should praise the Lord. Of all on earth, they have most occasion for such praise; of all among men, it may be presumed that they will be best qualified to appreciate the goodness of the Lord.

3. *And gathered them out of the lands.* The countries where they were scattered. In the times of the captivity the people were not all taken to one place, or did not all abide in one place. In the long exile—of seventy years — in Babylon, they would naturally be much scattered in the different provinces; and the attempt to collect them together, to restore them again to their native land, might be attended with much difficulty. ¶ *From the east,* etc. From all quarters; from the places where they were scattered abroad. That is, one taking his position in Babylon would see them dispersed from that place as a centre into all the surrounding country. ¶ *And from the south.* Marg., as in Heb., *from the sea.* In general, in the Old Testament, the word *sea* is used for the *west,* because the western boundary of the land of Palestine was the Mediterranean Sea. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. 9. But the supposed position of the speaker here is *Babylon,* and on that account the south might be fitly designated by the word *sea;* —as, on the south of Babylon, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean would be soon reached.

4. *They wandered in the wilderness.* On their return from Babylon; or, when God was conducting them again to their own land. The word *wilderness* in the Scriptures means a desolate, barren, uninhabited region, usually destitute of trees, of springs, and of water-courses. It does not denote, as it does with us, a region of extensive *forests.* Comp. Notes on Matt. iv. 1. ¶ *In a solitary way.* Rather, in a *waste* way; a land that was desolate and uncultivated. ¶ *They found no city to dwell in.* In their journeyings. This was true of the region between Babylon and Palestine; — a wide, barren, desolate waste.

5. *Hungry and thirsty.* As they would be, when wandering in such a desert. A more literal and expressive rendering would be, "Hungry,—also thirsty." ¶ *Their soul fainted in them.* The word here used—עָטַף, *ataph*—means properly to cover, to clothe, as with a garment, Ps. lxxiii. 6; or a field with grain, Ps. lxv. 13; then, to hide oneself, Job xxiii. 9; then, to cover with darkness, Ps. lxxvii. 3; cii., *title;* thus it denotes the state of mind when darkness seems to be in the way—a way of calamity, trouble, sorrow; of weakness, faintness, feebleness. Here it would seem from the connexion to refer to the exhaustion produced by the want of food and drink.

6 Then [v] they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses.

7 And he led them forth by the right [w] way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

[v] vers. 13, 19, 28; Ps. l. 15; Hos. v. 15.

8 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For [x] he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

[w] Ezra viii. 21; Isa. xxx. 21. [x] Luke i. 53, 79.

6. *Then they cried unto the* LORD *in their trouble.* The language in this verse is repeated in this psalm in vers. 13, 19, 28,—as if this were the main subject of the psalm, that when the people of God in different circumstances, or under various forms of trouble, call upon God, he hears them and delivers them. ¶ And *he delivered them out of their distresses.* The verb from which the noun here used is derived has the idea of being *narrow, straitened, compressed.* Hence the word comes to be used in the sense of distress of any kind,—as if one were pressed down, or compressed painfully in a narrow space.

7. *And he led them forth by the right way.* A literal version, if the term necessary to express it might be allowable, would be, "He *wayed* them in a straight *way;*" he made a way for them, and that was a straight way. He conducted them in the most direct path to the land to which they were going. ¶ *That they might go to a city of habitation.* A city where they might permanently dwell. The word *city* here seems to be used in the sense of *abode;* and the idea is, that he led them to a land where they might cease to be wanderers, and might find a settled home.

8. *Oh that* men *would praise the* LORD for *his goodness.* More literally, "Let such—or, let these—praise the Lord for his goodness,"—the word "*men*" having been supplied by our translators. Yet it is not improper to suppose that a wider range is intended than would be denoted if it were confined to those who had then been delivered. It was evidently designed to impress the minds of those who might use this psalm in their devotions; and the idea is, that the deliverance then vouchsafed to the people of God in their troubles should lead all to praise and adore him. Such a surprising interposition suggested an important lesson in regard to God, applicable to all men; and should lead all to praise him in view of the trait of character thus manifested, as that of a God who hears prayer when his people are in trouble, and who can make a straight path before them when they are in danger of being lost, and who can conduct them through the wilderness—the waste places—of this world, as he did his people across the pathless sands of the desert. The true use of all history is to teach us lessons about God. ¶ *And* for *his wonderful works to the children of men.* His doings as fitted to excite wonder and admiration. His dealings with his people in the desert furnished one illustration of this; the world is full of such illustrations. The desire expressed in this verse suggests the great lesson of the psalm.

9. *For he satisfieth the longing soul.* This does not mean—what is indeed true in itself—that God has made provision for the *soul* of man, and satisfies it when it longs or pants for its needed supply, but the reference is to the creatures of God—the living things that he has made; and the idea is, that he has made provision for their wants. He gives them food and drink, so that their wants are met. The *particular* reference here, however, in the word rendered *longing* is to *thirst,* as contradistinguished from the other member of the verse, where the reference is to *hunger.* So the word is used in Isa. xxix. 8.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound [y] in affliction and iron;

11 Because [z] they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel [a] of the Most High;

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to [b] help.

13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses.

14 He [c] brought them out of darkness and the shadow of

y Job xxxvi. 8, 9. *z* Lam. iii. 42; v. 16, 17.

a Luke vii. 30. *b* Job ix. 13. *c* Ps. cxlvi. 7.

¶ *And filleth the hungry soul with goodness.* Supplies the wants of the hungry with "good;" that is, with that which is "good" for it; which meets its wants, and imparts strength and happiness.

10. *Such as sit in darkness.* The reference in these verses (10–14) is evidently to the children of Israel, when in Babylon; and the design is, to show the goodness of God to them in their trouble, and the occasion which they had for praising him on that account. To "sit in darkness" is significant of great ignorance (comp. Notes on Luke i. 79; Isa. ix. 2); or of affliction and trouble, as darkness is an emblem of calamity. ¶ *And in the shadow of death.* A dark, gloomy, chilly shade such as *Death* would cast if he stood between us and the light. See Notes on Job iii. 5; comp. Job x. 21; Ps. xxiii. 4; xliv. 19; Isa. ix. 2. The reference is to the sad and gloomy residence of the Hebrews in the land of captivity. ¶ Being *bound in affliction and iron.* Captives and slaves. Comp. Ps. cv. 18.

11. *Because they rebelled against the words of God.* The commands of God. They did not keep his commandments. Their captivity was produced by national disobedience. See Notes on Dan. ix. 5–8. ¶ *And contemned the counsel.* They despised the instructions of God. The law of God, at the same time that it *is* law, is of the nature of *counsel,* since it is indicative of what God regards as wise and good, and since it is the best *advice* that God can give to men. A just and righteous law, while it involves *obligation* to obey it, is also the best counsel that can be given, and implies that the highest *wisdom* would be shown in being obedient to it. God will *command* nothing which he would not *advise,* and which it would not be *wisdom* to obey. ¶ *Of the Most High.* Of God, who, being supreme, has a right to rule over all, and to require that his laws shall be obeyed.

12. *Therefore he brought down their heart.* Their pride; their self-sufficiency; their self-complacency. They thought that they could do without God; they relied on their own resources, and were self-satisfied; but God showed them that all this was vain, and humbled them, as he often does the proud, in the dust. ¶ *With labour.* With trouble; with affliction; with disappointment; with reverses; with sorrow. The Hebrew word—עָמָל, *amal*—would include all this. Comp. Gen. xli. 51; Deut. xxvi. 7; Job iii. 10; xvi. 2. ¶ *They fell down.* They, as it were, *stumbled*—for so the Hebrew word means. They were walking along with a haughty air, and a high look, and suddenly they stumbled and fell. ¶ *And* there was *none to help.* No God to interpose; no nation to befriend them; no human arm to be stretched out for their deliverance. God gave them up, helpless, to the just consequences of their folly and wickedness.

13. *Then they cried unto the* LORD *in their trouble.* Comp. Dan. ix. This is repeated in the psalm in vers. 6, 13, 19, 28,—in all the divisions of the psalm except the last. See Notes on ver. 6.

14. *He brought them out of dark-*

death, and brake their bands in sunder.

15 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

16 For [d] he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

17 Fools, because of [e] their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

d Isa. xlv. 2. *e* Ps. xxxviii. 3, 5.

ness and the shadow of death. From their captivity; from calamity which seemed to be as gloomy as the shadow of death. ¶ *And brake their bands in sunder.* Delivered them from their bondage, *as if* the bands of a prisoner or captive were suddenly broken.

15. *Oh that* men *would praise,* etc. See Notes on ver. 8. The idea here is that the things just referred to *should* call forth expressions of gratitude to God. The immediate reference is to those who had partaken of these proofs of the Divine goodness, but still the language is so general as to be applicable to all classes of men.

16. *For he hath broken the gates of brass.* The immediate *reason* here given for praising the Lord is that he had "broken the gates of brass," continuing the thought from vers. 10–14. In the previous part of the psalm, in giving a reason for praising the Lord, the fact that he feeds the hungry was selected (ver. 9) because in the preceding part the allusion was to the sufferings of hunger and thirst (vers. 4, 5); here the fact that he had broken the gates of brass is selected, because the allusion in the immediately preceding verses (12–14) was to their imprisonment. In the construction of the psalm there is great regularity. The "gates of brass" refer probably to Babylon; and the idea is, that their deliverance had been as if the brazen gates of that great city had been broken down to give them free egress from their captivity. Thus the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus is announced in similar language: "I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron," Isa. xlv. 2. See Notes on that passage.

17. *Fools, because of their transgression.* Wicked men, considered as fools, because they *are* transgressors. Comp. Notes on Ps. xiv. 1; lxxiii. 3; lxxv. 4. The immediate allusion here, probably, is to the Jews, who had been so wicked and so supremely foolish in violating the commands of God, and making it necessary to bring upon them as a punishment the captivity at Babylon; but the language is made general because it will with equal propriety describe the conduct of *all* wicked men. There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God. ¶ *And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* A more literal rendering of this verse would be, "Fools from the way of their transgressions [that is, by their course of transgression], and by their iniquities, afflict themselves." The idea is, that it is *in the very line* of their trangressions; or, that they *bring it upon themselves.* All punishment is in fact in the line of the offence; that is, sin leads directly to it; or, in other words, if a man treads along in the path of sin, he will come to this result—to punishment. Punishment is not arbitrary on the part of God, and it is not of the nature of a mere direct infliction from *his* hand. It is what men mete out to themselves, and what they might have avoided if they had chosen to do so.

18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.* All food; all that is to be eaten. The word rendered *abhorreth* is a word which is used with reference to anything that is abominable or loathsome; that from which we turn away with disgust. The language is expressive of sickness, when

19 Then *f* they cry unto the LORD in their trouble; *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

20 He sent his word *g* and healed them, *h* and delivered *them* from their destructions.

21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works *i* to the children of men!

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, *k* and declare his works with *l* rejoicing.

f Job xxxiii. 19, etc.
g 2 Kings xx. 4, 5; Matt. viii. 8.
h Ps. xxx. 2, 3.
i Ps. lxvi. 5.
k Lev. vii. 12; Heb. xiii. 15.
l *singing.*

we *loathe* all food. ¶ *And they draw near unto the gates of death.* They are sick, and are ready to die. The reference is to the under world—the world where the dead are supposed to dwell. This is represented here as a city which is entered through gates. See Notes on Ps. ix. 13.

19. *Then they cry unto the* LORD, etc. See Notes on vers. 6, 13. The meaning here is, that if the *sick* cry to the Lord, he hears them, and delivers them. This cannot mean that it *always* occurs, but it occurs *so often* as to show that God can and does interpose to save; *so often* as to encourage us thus to call upon him when we are sick; *so often* as to lay a proper foundation for praise. Many persons — very many — can recall such instances in their own lives, when they seemed to all human appearance to be drawing near to the gates of death, and when, in connexion with prayer, their disease took a favourable turn, and they were restored again to health. Comp. Notes on James v. 14, 15.

20. *He sent his word, and healed them.* He did it by a word; it was necessary for him merely to give a command, and the disease left them. So it was in the life of the Saviour, who often healed the sick by a "word" (Matt. viii. 8; Luke vii. 7); and so now restoration from disease often *seems* to be accomplished as if some *word* had been spoken by one who had power, commanding the disease to depart. In all cases, also, whatever means may be used, healing power comes from God, and is under his control. Comp. Ps. xxx. 2. ¶ *And delivered* them *from their destructions.* From what would have destroyed them, if it had not been checked and removed.

21. *Oh that* men, etc. See Notes on ver. 8. Who can help joining in this wish, that those who have been restored from sickness, who have been raised up from the borders of the grave, *would* praise God for it! Who can help wishing that they had the feelings of Hezekiah when he was saved from the sickness which threatened his life—saved by the direct and manifest interposition of God—when he said (Isa. xxxviii. 20), "The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life in the house of the Lord!" Who can help wishing that men everywhere would see in such interpositions the proof of the benevolence of God, and would thank him that he has not forgotten guilty and suffering men!

22. *And let them sacrifice.* As in the cases before (vers. 9, 16), this is connected with the preceding part of the psalm, or is a *continuation* of the thought which had been interrupted by the prayer, "Oh that men would praise the Lord." The particular idea here is, that they who have been sick, and who have been restored to health, *should* offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving; or, that they are the proper persons to praise the Lord. The word *sacrifice* here is used in a large sense to denote worship or adoration. Let them worship God with thanks or praises. ¶ *The sacrifices of thanksgiving.* Heb., *praise.* Let them offer praise. ¶ *And*

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

25 For [l] he commandeth, and [1] raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted [m] because of trouble.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and [2] are at their wit's end.

l Jonah i. 4, etc.
[1] *maketh to stand.*
m Nahum ii. 10.
[2] *all their wisdom is swallowed up.*

declare his works with rejoicing. Marg., as in Heb., *singing.* Let them set forth his *doings* in songs. Comp. Ps. ix. 11.

23. *They that go down to the sea in ships.* The scene here changes again. From those that wander in the desert,—from those who are in prison,—from those who are sick,—the eye of the psalmist turns to those who encounter the perils of the ocean, and he finds there occasion for praise to God. The phrase "go down" or *descend* is employed here because the sea is lower than the land, and because we *descend* when we embark on board of a vessel. ¶ *That do business,* etc. Whose business or employment is on the ocean.

24. *These see the works of the Lord.* They—sailors—have a special opportunity to see the works of God. They see manifestations of his power which are not seen on the land. They see things which seem to come *directly* from God; which are *immediately* produced by him,—not as the things which occur on the land, which are the result of *growth,* and which are slowly developed. They seem in the solitariness and grandeur of the ocean to stand more directly in the presence of the great God. ¶ *And his wonders in the deep.* In the abyss; in that which is distinguished for its *depth,* as the mountains are for their height. Comp. Ps. cxlviii. 7.

25. *For he commandeth.* Heb., *he says;* that is, He speaks the word, and it is done. The mere expression of his will raises up the storm, and throws the sea into commotion. ¶ *And raiseth the stormy wind.* Marg., as in Heb., *Maketh to stand.* The "stormy wind" is literally, *the wind of the tempest.* ¶ *Which lifteth up the waves thereof.* The waves of the ocean. The wind seems to take them up, and lift them on high.

26. *They mount up to the heaven.* The mariners. That it refers to the seamen, and not to the waves, is apparent from the close of the verse: "their soul is melted." ¶ *They go down again to the depths.* The word here is different from that used in ver. 24, and rendered *deep,* but the idea is essentially the same. It is the sea or ocean considered as *deep;* as bottomless. The idea here is, that they seem to descend into the very depths of the ocean. ¶ *Their soul is melted because of trouble.* It seems to dissolve; it loses all its vigour; it faints. The word used—מוּג, *mûg* —means to melt; to flow down; to soften; and is then applied to the heart or mind that loses its courage or vigour by fear or terror. Ex. xv. 15; Josh. ii. 9, 24; Nah. i. 5. The *trouble* here referred to is that which arises from fear and danger.

27. *They reel to and fro.* The word here used — חָגַג, *hhagag* — means to dance as in a circle; then, to reel, or be giddy as drunkards are. ¶ *And stagger,* etc. This word means to move to and fro; to waver; to vacillate; and it is then applied to a man who cannot walk steadily—a drunkard. So the vessel, with the mariners on board, seems to stagger and reel in the storm. ¶ *And are at their wit's end.* Marg., as in Heb., *All their wisdom is swallowed up.* That is, They have no skill to guide

28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

29 He [n] maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

[n] Ps. lxxxix. 9; Matt. viii. 26.

the vessel. All that has been done by the wisdom of naval architecture in constructing it, and all that has been derived from experience in navigating the ocean, seems now to be useless. They are at the mercy of the winds and waves; they are dependent wholly on God; they can now only cry to him to save them. Often this occurs in a storm at sea, when the most skilful and experienced seaman feels that he can do no more.

28. *Then they cry unto the* LORD *in their trouble*, etc. See vers. 6, 13, 19. Sailors pray. If they do not pray elsewhere, they often do in a storm, when in danger of being wrecked and lost. A storm at sea brings hundreds on their knees who never prayed before,—for they feel that their only help is in God, and that it is a fearful thing to die. Then they do *right*. They do what *ought* to be done. But they do then only what men ought always to do; for it is as plain a duty to pray when we are in safety as when we are in danger; when sailing on a smooth sea as in a storm; when on the land as on the ocean. Men anywhere, and at any time may die; and men everywhere and at all times *should*, therefore, call upon God. Storms, tempests, fire, disease, and danger, only impel men to do what they *should* do always from higher motives, and when their motives will be likely to be more disinterested and pure.

29. *He maketh the storm a calm.* God does this, and God only can do it. The fact, therefore, that Jesus did it (Matt. viii. 26), proves that he was Divine. There can be no more striking proof of Divine power than the ability to calm the raging waves of the ocean by a word. This is literally, "He places the tempest to silence." ¶ *So that the waves thereof are still.* Are lulled. The ocean ceases to be agitated, and the surface becomes smooth. Nothing is more still than the ocean *in* a calm. Not a breath of air seems to stir; not a ripple agitates the surface of the sea; the sails of the vessel hang loose, and even the vessel seems to be perfectly at rest: "As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." So God can calm down the tempest of the soul. He can make the mind which was heaving and tossed, like the ocean, with anguish on account of guilt, and which trembled in view of the coming judgment, as calm as the ocean is when in its state of perfect repose. God can do *this*, and none *but* God can do it; and as Jesus thus stills the agitation of the guilty soul, as he did the waves of the sea, *this* proves also that he is Divine.

30. *Then are they glad because they be quiet.* Because the storm subsides, and they have the feeling of safety from danger. ¶ *So he bringeth them.* Rather, "*And* he guides them." ¶ *Unto their desired haven.* The word translated *haven* occurs nowhere else. By some it is rendered *shore*, but the word *haven* or *port* seems best to express the sense of the passage: "the haven of their desire." No one can appreciate this fully who has not been long at sea, and who has not experienced the intense desire once more to see *land*. Even then no one experiences it fully who has not some object there which he desires to see, or to accomplish. If his business is there, if it is his native land, if his father, mother, wife, or children are there, if it is the place of his father's sepulchre, and the place where he was born and reared, how intense becomes

31 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

32 Let them exalt him also in [o] the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33 He [p] turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground;

34 A [q] fruitful land into [1] barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

o Ps. xxii. 22; lxvi. 16; cxi. 1.
p 1 Kings xvii. 1, 7.
q Gen. xiii. 10, xix. 25.
[1] *saltness.*

the desire to see that land once more. So God brings his people to rest in heaven,—their haven, their home. After being tossed by the tempests of life, after encountering its storms and dangers, after the fear and agitation experienced, he stills the storms; the way becomes smooth and calm; the end of the voyage is serene; and death is like the ship smoothly gliding into port with its sails all set. The soul enters heaven—the desired haven—the port that was longed for; a safe haven, beyond all storms or tempests; an eternal home!

31. *Oh that* men, etc. See Notes on vers. 8, 15, 21. Assuredly they who are thus delivered from the dangers of the sea should praise the Lord; they who have seen the wonders of God on the great ocean should *never* forget God.

32. *Let them exalt him also.* Let them lift up his name on high; let them make it conspicuous. The word means *to lift up,* and is applied to praise because we thus, as it were, *lift up* God, or make him conspicuous. ¶ *In the congregation of the people.* Not merely in private, but in public. As his doings are public and conspicuous,—as they pertain to all,—men should acknowledge him in their public capacity, or when assembled together. ¶ *And praise him in the assembly of the elders.* The old men; the men eminent for experience and wisdom. Perhaps this refers to those who occupied some official position in public worship, as appointed to preside over that worship, and to conduct it. We know that the arrangement was early made to appoint a body of aged men to preside over the assemblies for worship, and to direct the devotions of the people. In the presence of such venerable and venerated men, they are here exhorted to give due praise to God. The *reason* for this seems to be partly drawn from what had been referred to in the previous verses,—the power of God as seen in stilling the tempests of the ocean; and partly from what is immediately referred to—the blessing of God on the labours of man in cultivating the earth.

33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness.* He makes great changes in the earth; he shows that he has absolute dominion over it. See Notes on Isa. xliv. 26, 27. On the word *wilderness,* see Notes on ver. 4. The point here is, that God had such control over nature that he could make the bed of a river dry and barren as the rocky or sandy desert. He could effectually dry up the stream, and make it so dry and parched that nothing would grow but the most stunted shrubs, such as were found in the waste and sandy desert. ¶ *And the water-springs into dry ground.* The very fountains of the rivers: not only drying up the river itself by leading it off into burning wastes where it would be evaporated by the heat, or lost in the sand,—but so directly affecting the *sources* of the streams as to make *them* dry.

34. *A fruitful land.* Heb., A land of fruit. That is, a land that would produce abundance. The word *fruit* here is not used in the limited sense in which we now employ it, but means *any* productions of the earth. ¶ *Into barrenness.* Marg., as in Heb., *saltness.* The word is used to denote a barren soil, because where salt *abounds* the soil *is* barren. Thus it

35 He [r] turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39 Again, they are minished [s] and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

[r] Ps. cxiv. 8; Isa. xli. 18.

[s] 2 Kings x. 32.

is around the Dead Sea. Comp. Job xxxix. 6; Jer. xvii. 6. See also Virg. Geor. II. 238, "Salsa...tellus—frugibus infelix;" Pliny, Hist. Nat. 31. 7; Bochart, Hieroz. t. i., p. 872. ¶ *For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* As he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah;—probably alluding to that.

35. *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water.* A pool; a lake. See Notes on Isa. xxxv. 6, 7. ¶ *And dry ground into water-springs.* Not merely watering it with rain from heaven, but causing gushing fountains to break forth, and to flow continually, diffusing fertility and beauty everywhere.

36. *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell.* Those who were in want; those who would have perished. It is not necessary to refer this to any particular case. It is a general statement, pertaining to changes which God makes upon the earth, as great as if he *should* thus convert a desert into a fruitful field—a barren waste into a land abounding in springs of water; as if he *should* conduct thither a company of famished men, and provide for them food in abundance. ¶ *That they may prepare a city for habitation.* A permanent dwelling-place for man.

37. *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards.* Cultivate the earth. The culture of the vine was an important feature in agriculture in Palestine, and hence it is made so prominent here. ¶ *Which may yield fruits of increase.* The fruits which the earth produces.

38. *He blesseth them also.* In the manner immediately specified. ¶ *So that they are multiplied greatly.* This was regarded as one of the highest blessings which God could confer, and hence it was so often promised by him to the patriarchs, as a proof of his favour, that their seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore. Gen. xiii. 16; xxii. 17; xxvi. 4; xxxii. 12. ¶ *And suffereth not their cattle to decrease.* The keeping of herds of cattle was also an important point in husbandry, and hence it was a blessing that they were made to increase, and that they were kept from the diseases to which cattle are subject.

39. *Again, they are minished,* etc. Literally, "And they are made to decrease." That is,—all is in the hand of God. He rules and directs all things. If there is prosperity, it comes from him; if there are reverses, they occur under his hand. Men are not always prosperous. There are changes, misfortunes, disappointments, sorrows. God so deals with the race as in the best manner to secure the recognition of himself:—not always sending prosperity, lest men should regard it as a thing of course, and forget that it comes from him;—and not making the course of life uniformly that of disappointment and sorrow, lest they should feel that there is no God presiding over human affairs. He visits now with prosperity, and now with adversity;—now with success, and now with reverses, showing that his agency is constant, and that men are wholly dependent on him. In existing circumstances—since man is what he is—it is better that there should be alternations, reverses, and changes,

40 He [t] poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the [1] wilderness, *where there is* no way.

41 Yet [u] setteth he the poor on high [2] from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

42 The [v] righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

t Job xii. 21, 24. [1] Or, *void place*
u 1 Sam. ii. 5—8; Ps. cxiii. 7—9. [2] *after.*
v Job v. 15, 16; xxii. 19.

than that there should be a uniform course. ¶ *Through oppression.* Anything that *presses* or *straitens.* ¶ *Affliction.* Evil;—here, in the sense of calamity. ¶ *And sorrow.* Anguish, pain:—of body or mind.

40. *He poureth contempt upon princes.* He treats them as if they were common men; he pays no regard in his providence to their station and rank. They are subjected to the same wants as others; they meet with reverses like others; they become captives like others; they sicken and die like others; they are laid in the grave like others; and, with the same offensiveness, they turn back to dust. Between monarchs and their subjects, masters and their slaves, mistresses and their handmaidens, rich men and poor men, beauty and deformity, there is no distinction in the pains of sickness, in the pangs of dying, in the loathsomeness of the grave. The process of corruption goes on in the most splendid coffin, and beneath the most costly monument which art and wealth can rear, as well as in the plainest coffin, and in the grave marked by no stone or memorial. What can more strikingly show *contempt* for the trappings of royalty, for the adornings of wealth, for the stars and garters of nobility, for coronets and crowns, for the diamonds, the pearls, and the gold that decorate beauty, than that which occurs *in a grave!* The very language used here, alike in the Hebrew and in our translation, is found in Job xii. 21. The word rendered *princes* properly means *willing, voluntary, prompt;* and is then applied to the generous, to the noble-minded, to those who give liberally. It then denotes one of noble rank, as the idea of rank in the mind of the Orientals was closely connected with the notion of liberality in giving. Thus it comes to denote one of noble birth, and might be applied to any of exalted rank. ¶ *And causeth them to wander in the wilderness.* Marg., *void place.* The Hebrew word — תֹּהוּ, *tohu*— means properly wasteness, desolateness; emptiness, vanity. See Gen. i. 2; Job xxvi. 7; Isa. xli. 29; xliv. 9; xlix. 4. Here it means an empty, uninhabited place; a place where there is no path to guide; a land of desolation. The reference seems to be to the world beyond the grave; the land of shadows and night. Comp. Notes on Job x. 21, 22. ¶ Where there is *no way.* Literally "no way." That is, no well-trodden path. All must soon go to that pathless world.

41. *Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction.* Marg., *after.* The sense is not materially different. The idea is, that while he thus humbles princes, bringing them down from their lofty position, he has respect to the poor in their condition of suffering and trial, and raises them from that depressed state, and gives them prosperity. Thus he orders the circumstances of men, and shows his sovereignty. ¶ *And maketh* him *families like a flock.* Numerous as a flock. Large families were accounted a blessing among the Hebrews. See Notes on ver. 38.

42. *The righteous shall see* it, *and rejoice.* Shall see all these changes; shall see in their own case the proofs of the Divine favour. They shall thus have occasion for praise. ¶ *And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.* The wicked shall be silenced; they shall be dumb. The righteous shall find, in these varied scenes, occasion for

43 Whoso *w* *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

w Jer. ix. 12; Hosea xiv. 9.

praise and joy; the wicked shall be able to find no occasion for complaining or murmuring. The Divine dealings shall be manifestly so just, and so worthy of universal approval, that, even though the wicked are disposed to complain against God, they will be able to find nothing which will justify them in such complaints.

43. *Whoso* is *wise.* All who are truly wise. That is, all who have a proper understanding of things, or who are disposed to look at them aright. ¶ *And will observe these* things. Will attentively consider them; will reason upon them correctly; will draw just conclusions from them; will allow them to produce their *proper* impression on the mind. The meaning is, that these things would not be understood at a glance, or by a hasty and cursory observation, but that all who would take time to study them would see in them such proofs of wisdom and goodness that they could not fail to come to the conclusion that God is worthy of confidence and love. ¶ *Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the* LORD. They will perceive that God is a merciful Being; that he seeks the welfare of the universe; that he desires the good of all; that the whole system is so arranged as to be adapted to secure the greatest good in the universe. No one can study the works of God, or mark the events of his providence, without perceiving that there are *innumerable* arrangements which have no other end than to produce happiness; which can be explained only on the supposition that God is a benevolent Being; which would not exist under the government of a malevolent being. And, although there *are* things which *seem* to be arrangements to cause suffering, and although sin and misery have been allowed to come into the world, yet we are not in circumstances to enable us to show that, in some way, these may *not* be consistent with a desire to promote the happiness of the universe, or that there may *not* be some explanation, at present too high for us, which will show that the principle of benevolence is applicable to *all* the works of God. Meantime, where we can—as we can in numberless cases—see the proofs of benevolence, let us praise God; where we cannot, let us silently trust him, and believe that there will yet be some way in which we may see this as the angels now see it, and, like them, praise him for what now seems to us to be dark and incomprehensible. There is an *eternity* before us in which to study the works of God, and it would not be strange if *in* that eternity we may learn things about God which we cannot understand now, or if in that eternity things now to us as dark as midnight may be made clear as noonday. How many things incomprehensible to us in childhood, become clear in riper years!

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title in this respect. The psalm is not an original composition, but is made up, with slight alterations, of parts of two other psalms, Ps. lvii. 7–11; lx. 5–12.

When the psalm was so arranged, or why the parts of two former psalms were thus brought together to form a new composition, it is impossible now to determine. It *may* have been for a mere purpose of art; or it may, more probably, have occurred when the two parts of psalms already in use might be so combined as to be adapted to some new event. It may have been, also, that what had been expressed *on two different occasions* might now be fulfilled or accomplished *on some one occasion*, and that thoughts which had been expressed separately before might now be unitedly uttered in praise. Rosenmüller

PSALM CVIII.

A Song *or* Psalm of David.

O GOD, [x] my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp; I *myself* will awake early.

3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens, and thy truth *reacheth* unto the [1] clouds.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth:

6 That [y] thy beloved may be delivered, save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.

[x] Ps. lvii. 7—11.

[1] Or, *skies.* [y] Ps. lx. 5, etc.

supposes that the psalm in its present form was arranged on the return from the captivity at Babylon, and that the parts of the two separate psalms were found to be suitable for a national song at that time, and were therefore thus brought together. This supposition would have much probability if the psalm were not ascribed to David;—and perhaps this fact need not be an insuperable objection,—since, if the two psalms from which this is compiled were the work of David, the author of the arrangement might without impropriety attribute the composition itself to David.

There are some slight variations in the psalm, as here arranged, from the original psalms; but why these were made cannot now be determined. Substantially all that will be necessary in the exposition of the psalm will be to notice these variations.

1. *O God, my heart is fixed.* Prepared, fitted, ready. See Notes on Ps. lvii. 7. In Ps. lvii. 7, this is repeated:—"My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed:"—indicating that there *might* have been some doubt or vacillation caused by the circumstances then existing, and the repetition would have respect to that, as if the psalmist had been unsettled and wavering for a time, but was at last firm. In such circumstances it would not be unnatural to *repeat* the assertion, as if there were no longer any doubt. In the beginning of a psalm, however, where there had been no previous expression or feeling of doubt so far as appears, there would be no propriety in repeating the assertion. ¶ *I will sing and give praise.* See Notes on Ps. lvii. 7. ¶ *Even with my glory.* This is not in Ps. lvii. It is literally here, "*truly my glory.*" In Ps. lvii. 8, however, the expression, "Awake up, my glory," occurs, and this seems to correspond with that language. It means here that it was his glory—his honour—thus to be employed in giving praise to God. It was worthy of all that there was elevated in his nature; of all that constituted his glory; of his highest powers. At no time is man employed in a more noble and lofty work than praise.

2. *Awake, psaltery and harp,* etc. This is copied without change from Ps. lvii. 8.

3. *I will praise thee, O* LORD, etc. This is taken from Ps. lvii. 9. The only change is the substitution here of the name *Jehovah* for *Adonai. Why* that change was made is unknown.

4. *For thy mercy,* etc. This is taken from Ps. lvii. 10. The only change is in the expression "above the heavens," instead of "unto the heavens." The sense is essentially the same. The particular idea here, if it differs at all from the expression in Ps. lvii., is, that the mercy of God seems to *descend* from heaven upon man, or *comes down* from on high.

5. *Be thou exalted,* etc. This is taken from Ps. lvii. 11. The only change in the Hebrew is in the insertion of the word "and," "*and* thy glory above all the earth."

6. *That thy beloved may be delivered.* The word rendered *beloved,* and the verb rendered *may be delivered,* are both in the plural number,

7 God hath spoken in his holiness: I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8 Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah [z] *is* my law-giver;

9 Moab *is* my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

11 *Wilt* not *thou,* O God, *who* hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

12 Give us help from trouble: for [a] vain *is* the help of man.

13 Through God [b] we shall do valiantly: for he [c] *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

[z] Gen. xlix. 10. [a] Job xvi. 2; Isa. ii. 22.

[b] 2 Chron. xx. 12; Isa. xlv. 24.
[c] Rom. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. ii. 14.

showing that it is not an individual that is referred to, but that the people of God are intended. This is taken without any alteration from Ps. lx. 5. In *that* psalm the prayer for deliverance is grounded on the afflictions of the people, and the fact that God had given them "a banner that it might be displayed because of the truth,"—or, in the cause of truth. See Notes on that psalm. In the psalm before us, while the prayer for deliverance is the same, the *reason* for that prayer is different. It is that God is exalted; that his mercy is above the heavens; that his glory is above all the earth, and that he is thus exalted that he *may* interpose and save his people. ¶ *Save* with *thy right hand, and answer me.* The Hebrew here is the same as in Ps. lx. 5, where it is rendered "and *hear* me."

7. *God hath spoken,* etc. This is taken, without change, from Ps. lx. 6. See Notes on that place.

8. *Gilead is mine,* etc. This is taken from Ps. lx. 7. The only change is the omission of the word *and* before "Manasseh."

9. *Moab,* etc. This is taken from Ps. lx. 8. The only change is in the close of the verse. Instead of "Philistia, triumph thou because of me" (Ps. lx. 8), it is here, "Over Philistia will I triumph." Why the change was made is unknown.

10. *Who will bring me,* etc. This is taken, without alteration, from Ps. lx. 9.

11. Wilt *not* thou, *O God,* etc. This is taken from Ps. lx. 10, with no change in the Hebrew, except that the word *thou* (in the first member of the verse) is omitted.

12. *Give us help from trouble,* etc. This is copied from Ps. lx. 11.

13. *Through God we shall do,* etc. This also is taken from Ps. lx. 12, without change.

Thus the psalm, though made up of parts of two separate psalms, is complete and continuous in itself. There is no break or discrepancy in the current of thought, but the unity is as perfect as though it had been an original composition. It is to be remarked, also, that though in the original psalms the parts which are here used have a different connexion, and are separately complete there, yet as employed here, they seem to be exactly fitted to the new use which is made of the language; and though the original *reasons* for the use of the language do not appear here, yet there is a sufficient reason for that language apparent in the psalm as rearranged. To an Israelite, also, there might be a new interest in the use of the language in the fact that words with which he was familiar, as employed for other purposes, *could* be thus combined, and made applicable to a new occasion in the national history.

PSALM CIX.

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is nothing in the psalm to make us doubt the correctness of the title.

PSALM CIX.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

HOLD [d] not thy peace, O God of my praise; [e]

2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of [1] the deceitful 2 are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying [f] tongue.

3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and

[d] Ps. lxxxiii. 1. [e] Jer. xvii. 14.

[1] *deceit.* [2] *have opened* themselves.
[f] Matt. xxvi. 60; Acts vi. 13.

Kimchi supposes that it refers to the enemies of David in the time of Saul. Grotius and Knapp suppose that it refers to Ahithophel; Dathe, to Shimei; De Wette, that it refers to national foes at a later period than the time of David. It is impossible now to ascertain the occasion on which it was composed. It would seem to have been one of the most trying in the life of David, when his enemies were most bitter against him. It is one of the "*imprecatory*" psalms, and one which is as difficult to reconcile with a kind and forgiving spirit as any other in the book.

In the New Testament (Acts i. 20) a part of the psalm is applied to Judas the traitor, but without its being necessary to conclude that it had any original reference to him. The conduct of Judas was *like* the conduct of the enemy of David; the language used in the one case might be properly used in the other.

The psalm consists of three parts:—

I. A description of the enemies of the psalmist (vers. 1–5), as (*a*) deceitful and lying; (*b*) as using words of hatred; (*c*) as fighting against him without cause; (*d*) as returning evil for good, and hatred for love. From this it would seem that the persons referred to were some who had been closely connected with the author; who had received important benefits from him; who had been the subjects of his prayer; and who pursued him from mere malice.

II. A prayer for the punishment of those who had thus wronged him—referring particularly to some *one* person who had been prominent, or who had instigated others, imploring the infliction of just punishment on *him* as if he were alone responsible, vers. 6-20. It is in this part of the psalm that the principal difficulty in the interpretation consists, as this is made up of severe and apparently harsh and revengeful imprecations. All is in fact invoked on him that any man could ever desire to see inflicted on an enemy.

III. A prayer for the sufferer's own deliverance, with a promise of thanksgiving, vers. 21-31. The psalmist here describes his miserable and suffering condition, and prays that God would interpose,—expressing a willingness to suffer *any* thing at the hand of man if God would be his friend—a willingness that they should continue to "*curse*," if God would "*bless*." As the result of all, he says that he would find delight in praise—in the public acknowledgment of the goodness of God.

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Notes on the title to Ps. iv.

1. *Hold not thy peace.* That is, Speak for my defence,—as if God had looked with unconcern on the wrongs which were done to him. See Notes on Ps. lxxxiii. 1. ¶ *O God of my praise.* The God whom I praise; whom I worship and adore. It implies that he was accustomed to praise him, and desired still to praise him. He sought that God would interpose now that he might have new occasion for praise.

2. *For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful.* Literally, "The mouth of wickedness, and the mouth of deceit." This acquaints us with the nature of the wrong which had been done him. It was slander; —undeserved reproach. ¶ *Are opened against me.* Marg., *have opened*; that is, have opened themselves. ¶ *They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.* They have accused me of things which are not true; they have made false charges against me. David, as has not been uncommon with good men, was called repeatedly to this trial.

3. *They compassed me about also with words of hatred.* They attacked me on every side; they assailed me,

fought against me without [g] a cause.

4 For my love they are my adversaries: but [h] I *give myself unto* prayer.

[g] John xv. 25. [h] Luke vi. 11, 12. [i] Ps. xxxv. 7, 12.

5 And [i] they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

6 Set thou a wicked man over him; and let [1] Satan stand at his right hand.

[1] Or, *an adversary*, Zech. iii. 1.

not merely in one form and direction, but in every form, and in every direction. I could turn no way—I could go nowhere—where I did not encounter these slanderous reports. ¶ *And fought against me without a cause.* Contended against me, or fought against me, with *words*. They sought to do me all the harm they could. The phrase "without a cause" means that he had given them no occasion for this conduct; he had not wronged them; it was mere malignity. See Ps. xxxv. 7; lxix. 4. Comp. John xv. 25.

4. *For my love*, etc. As a recompence for my love; or, this is the return which I get for all the expressions of my love to them. The enemies referred to were those whom he had treated kindly; to whom he had done good. This is not uncommon in the world. It was illustrated in an eminent degree in the life of the Saviour. ¶ *But I* give myself unto *prayer.* Literally, "I—prayer;" that is, I am all prayer; I continually pray. This may mean, either, that he bore these trials with a meek spirit, and did not allow these things to disturb his devotions; or, more probably, that he prayed constantly *for them;* he desired their good, and sought it from above.

5. *And they have rewarded me evil for good.* Literally, "They have placed against me." They have put it in my way; it is what they had to set before me. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 12, where the same expression occurs. ¶ *And hatred for my love.* Instead of loving me in return for my love, they have met me with the expressions of hatred. This often occurred in the life of David; it was constant in the life of the Saviour; it is habitually manifested by men towards God; it is often experienced by good men now; it *may* occur in the life of any man—and if it *does* occur to us, we should not think that any strange thing has happened to us.

6. *Set thou a wicked man over him.* This commences the imprecatory part of the psalm, extending to ver. 20. The first thing that the psalmist asks is, that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself:—a man regardless of justice, truth, and right; a man who would respect character and propriety no more than he had himself done. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished *in the line of his offences.* It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts,—for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavouring to secure. ¶ *And let Satan stand at his right hand.* As his counsellor and adviser. The language would be properly applicable to one who had been a counsellor or adviser to a king in the administration of the government; and the prayer is, that he might know what it was to *have* such a one as *his* counsellor and adviser. The language used would seem to make it not improbable that David here refers particularly to some one who had occupied this position in reference to himself, and who had betrayed his trust; who had given him crafty and malignant counsel; who had led him into bad measures; who had used his position to promote his own interests at the expense of his master's. David *had* such counsellors, as any one in authority *may*

7 When he shall be judged, let him [1] be condemned: and let his prayer [k] become sin.

[1] *go out guilty*, or, *wicked*.

8 Let his days be few: *and* let another take [l] his [2] office.

[k] Prov. xxviii. 9. [l] Acts i. 20.
[2] Or, *charge*.

have. The prayer, then, would be, that such a man might be punished in his own line; that he might know what it was to have a bad and wicked adviser. The word rendered *Satan*—שָׂטָן—is in the margin rendered *adversary*. In the Septuagint it is διάβολος; in the Vulgate, *diabolus*. See Notes on Job i. 6, for its meaning. The prayer here seems not to be that the devil or Satan might stand near him as his counsellor; but that a man—a real adversary—an accuser—one with a malignant heart—one who would make use of his position to accomplish his own purposes, and to betray the interests of his master, might give him counsel, as seems to have been done in the case of David.

7. *When he shall be judged*, etc. When for his offences he shall be arraigned. The psalmist supposes that he *might* be put on trial; he seems to suppose that this *would be*. Such wickedness could not always escape detection, and sooner or later he would be arrested and brought to trial. *When* this should occur, the psalmist prays that justice might be done; that he might be condemned, as he *ought* to be. Such a prayer could not in itself be wrong, for assuredly it cannot be proper for magistrates to pray that the wicked man may escape, or that they may themselves fail in the very object for which they are appointed. See General Introd. § 6. (5.) *e, f*. ¶ *And let his prayer become sin.* Evidently his prayer in reference to his *trial* for crime; his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. Let it be seen in the result that such a prayer was *wrong*; that it was, in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man—a man who *ought* to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer *would* be if offered for a murderer, or violator of the law,—a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that *such* a prayer would be wrong, or would be a "sin;" and so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer *for his own escape* would be "sin." The psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be *seen* to be in fact a prayer for the protection and escape of a *bad man*. A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the psalmist prays for.

8. *Let his days be few.* Let him be soon cut off; let his life be shortened. It cannot be wrong for an officer of justice to aim at this; to desire it; to pray for it. How strange it would be for a magistrate to pray *that a murderer or a traitor should be long-lived!* ¶ And *let another take his office.* So every man acts, and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by some one, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that "another should take his office;" and for this it is *right* to labour and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety. The word rendered *office* here is in the margin *charge*. It properly denotes *a mustering, an enumeration*; then, care, watch, oversight, charge, as in an army, or in a civil office. In Acts i. 20, this passage is applied to Judas, and the word—the same word as in the Septuagint here—is rendered in the text *bishopric*,—in the margin, *office*. See Notes on that passage. It had no original reference to Judas, but the language was exactly adapted to him, and to the circumstances of

9 Let his children be fatherless, [m] and his wife a widow.

10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.

11 Let [n] the extortioner catch all that he hath: and let the strangers spoil his labour.

m Ex. xxii. 24. *n* Job xviii. 9, 19.

the case, as it is used by the apostle in that passage.

9. *Let his children be fatherless.* Heb., *his sons.* This is what *always* occurs when a criminal who is a father is executed. It is one of the consequences of crime; and if the officer of justice does his duty, of course, the sons of such a man *must* be made fatherless. The prayer is, simply, that justice may be done, and all this is but an enumeration of what must follow from the proper execution of the laws. ¶ *And his wife a widow.* This implies no malice against the wife, but may be consistent with the most tender compassion for her sufferings. It is simply *one* of the consequences which must follow from the punishment of a bad man. The enumeration of these things shows the enormity of the crime—just as the consequences which follow from the execution of a murderer are an illustration of the Divine sense of the evil of the offence.

10. *Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg.* Let them continually wander about with no home —no fixed habitation. Let them be compelled to ask their daily food at the hand of charity. Here we enter on a part of the psalm which is more difficult to be reconciled with a proper feeling than the portions which have been considered. It is, indeed, a frequent consequence of crime that the children of those who are punished *are* vagabonds and beggars, but this is not a necessary consequence; and there *seems* here, therefore, to be a mixture of personal feeling, or a feeling of revenge. This runs through the remaining portion of the imprecatory part of the psalm. I confess that it is difficult to explain this without admitting that the expressions are a record only of what actually occurred in the mind of a man, truly pious, but not perfect,—a man who thus, to illustrate the workings of the mind even when the general character was holy, was allowed to record his own feelings, though wrong, just as he would record the conduct of another, or his own conduct, though wrong, as a simple matter of fact—a record of what actually was felt. The *record* may be exactly correct; the sentiment recorded may have been wholly incapable of vindication. See General Introd. § 6 (6). ¶ *Let them seek* their bread *also out of their desolate places.* In places uninhabited by man; in barren regions; in deserts: let them be compelled to live on the scanty food which they may pick up there,—the roots, or the wild fruits, which will simply keep them alive. See Notes on Job xxx. 4.

11. *Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.* Literally, "Let the extortioner cast a snare over all that he hath;" that is, let him seize all his property. The word rendered *catch* — נָקַשׁ, *nakash* — is a word which means to lay a snare, as for birds and wild animals, and hence it means to ensnare, to entrap, to catch. The word rendered "*extortioner*" means literally one who lends or borrows money; a money-loaner; in our times, *a broker.* Here it refers to one who loaned money on interest; or who took advantage of the necessities of others to lend money at high rates — thus sooner or later seizing upon and securing the property of another. The prayer here is, that he might be in such circumstances as to make it necessary to fall into the hands of those who would thus come into possession of all his property. ¶ *And let the strangers spoil his labour.* Let

12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

13 Let his posterity [o] be cut off; *and* in the generation following let their name be [p] blotted out.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers [q] be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, [r] but

o Ps. xxxvii. 28; Isa. xiv. 20.

p Prov. x. 7. *q* Ex. xx. 5. *r* James ii. 13.

strangers *plunder* his labour; that is, the fruit of his labour. Let them seize and possess what he has earned and gained to enjoy it themselves. The remarks made on ver. 10, will apply to this verse and the following.

12. *Let there be none to extend mercy unto him.* Let him find compassion and sympathy in no one. When he suffers, let him be left to bear it alone. Let there be none found to shed a tear of compassion over him, or to relieve him. Literally, "Let there be no one *to draw out* kindness to him." ¶ *Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.* To show them mercy or kindness. See Notes on ver. 10.

13. *Let his posterity be cut off.* To have a numerous posterity, to have the name and family perpetuated, was regarded among the Hebrews as one of the greatest and most desirable blessings. Hence to pray that all one's family might be cut off was one of the severest forms of malediction which could be employed. ¶ And *in the generation following.* The very next generation. Let not his family be perpetuated at all. ¶ *Let their name be blotted out.* As a name is erased from a catalogue or muster-roll when one dies.

14. *Let the iniquity of his fathers.* Of his ancestors. ¶ *Be remembered with the* LORD. Or, by the Lord. The doctrine of the Bible is, that God "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate" him (Ex. xx. 5); the matter of fact is that children and children's children often suffer from the errors, the crimes, and the follies of their parents, as in the case of intemperance, murder, and treason (comp. Notes on Rom. v. 12, *et seq.*); and the prayer here is, that this regular effect of sin might follow in this instance; that these consequences might not be arrested by Divine interposition. ¶ *And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.* This is probably added to complete the parallelism;—the sin of his father and his mother. There may, however, if this is a composition of David, be a similar allusion to that which occurs in Ps. li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The prayer is, that whatever effects might properly follow from the fact that his mother was a sinner —either in some peculiar sense, or in the general sense that all are sinners—might come upon him.

15. *Let them be before the* LORD *continually.* Let their sins never pass from the mind of God. Let him never so forget them as *not* to inflict punishment for them. ¶ *That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.* That they may be wholly forgotten among men. Let their very name perish; and let the offender in this case be in the condition of those who have no ancestors to whom they can refer with pride and pleasure. The idea here is drawn from the honour which is felt in being able to refer to ancestors worthy of being remembered for their virtues.

16. *Because that he remembered not to show mercy.* He had no compassion; he was severe, harsh, unjust, unfeeling. ¶ *But persecuted the poor*

persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

17 As [s] he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come [1] into his bowels like water, [t] and like oil into his bones.

19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

20 *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

[s] Ez. xxxv. 6. [1] *within him.* [t] Num. v. 22.

and needy man. The man that was destitute of friends; that was a wanderer and a beggar. There were times in the life of David when this would be strictly and literally applicable to him. ¶ *That he might even slay the broken in heart.* The man whose heart was crushed by sorrow,—that he might put "the finishing stroke" to all, and send him to the grave. Whatever might have been the *feeling* which prompted to this prayer, or however difficult it may be to vindicate the psalmist's expression of feeling, there can be no doubt as to the propriety of inflicting punishment on such a man. The sufferings invoked are none too severe to be inflicted on a man who persecutes the poor and needy, and seeks so to multiply sorrows that the man already crushed and broken in heart shall sink to the grave.

17. *As he loved cursing,* etc. As he loved to curse others; as he seemed to have a pleasure alike in the act of cursing and in the feeling which prompts to cursing, let him see what it is; let it come upon him in its fulness. He has chosen this as his portion; let it be his. This, in the original, is in the indicative mood, and not, as in our version, in the optative form: "He loved cursing, and it has come upon him; he did not delight in blessing, and it is far from him." Still, the connexion would rather seem to require that we should understand this as a prayer, and not as an affirmation, for the object of the whole seems not to be to state what *had* come upon him, but what the psalmist wished *might* come upon him. ¶ *As he delighted not in blessing,* etc. As he had no pleasure in wishing that others might be happy, or in any measures which would tend to promote their happiness, so let everything that could be regarded as a blessing be put far from him;—let him know nothing of it.

18. *As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment.* Moral qualities are often compared with raiment—as that in which we *appear* to our fellow-men. See 1 Pet. v. 5; Job xxix. 14. ¶ *So let it come into his bowels like water.* Marg., *within him.* Heb., *In his midst.* Let it penetrate him through and through. Let no part of him be unaffected by it. ¶ *And like oil into his bones.* As if oil flowed through all his bones, so let the effects of cursing pervade his whole frame. The prayer is, that his entire nature might feel the effects of cursing; that he might know to the full what he was endeavouring to bring on others.

19. *Let it be unto him as the garment* which *covereth him.* He has *chosen* to put it on, to wear it, to appear in it; so let him constantly feel its consequences. As he is always obliged to wear clothing, so let this be as constantly with him and upon him as his mantle and his sash. ¶ *And for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.* The belt or girdle which he constantly wears. See Notes on Matt. v. 38.

20. Let *this* be *the reward of mine adversaries from the* LORD, etc. The word rendered *reward* means usually

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's [u] sake: because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.

22 For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

23 I am gone like the shadow [v] when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.

24 My knees [w] are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness.

25 I became also a reproach [x] unto them: *when* they looked upon me [y] they shaked their heads.

26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy;

27 That they may know that

[u] Ps. xxv. 11. [v] Ps. cii. 11; cxliv. 4.
[w] Heb. xii. 12. [x] Ps. xxii. 6, 7.
[y] Matt. xxvii. 39.

work, labour, occupation, business; then, what one earns by his work,—reward, recompence, Lev. xix. 13. The meaning here is, Let them constantly receive these things which I have prayed for (vers. 6–19); let them be constantly treated in this manner. This is a summing up of his entire wish—his whole desire. It cannot be proved that they did *not deserve* all this; it cannot be shown that if all this came upon them at the hand of God, it would be unjust; it cannot be denied that such things as these, either singly, in groups, or in succession, do actually come upon wicked men; and the prayer in the case *may* have been merely that *justice* might be done. Still, as before remarked, it is not easy wholly to vindicate the expressed feelings of the psalmist. See Notes on ver. 10.

21. *But do thou for me, O* GOD *the Lord, for thy name's sake.* That is, Interpose for me; exert thy power in my behalf. The phrase "for thy name's sake" implies that the motive which prompted him was a desire that God might be honoured. It was not primarily or mainly for his own happiness; it was that God might be glorified, that his character might be illustrated, that his plans might be accomplished. Comp. Notes on Dan. ix. 18, 19. ¶ *Because thy mercy* is *good.* That is, It is the characteristic of mercy to do good; to show kindness. ¶ *Deliver thou me.* He prays that God would *manifest* himself as he really *was*, as a God of mercy.

22. *For I* am *poor and needy.* I am helpless and dependent. I am in a condition where I need thy gracious interposition. ¶ *And my heart is wounded within me.* I am as one that is prostrated by a weapon—as if my heart had been pierced. I have no courage, no strength. I am like one who lies wounded on a battle-field.

23. *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.* See Notes on Ps. cii. 11. ¶ *I am tossed up and down as the locust.* Agitated, moved, driven about, as a cloud of locusts is by the wind. The meaning of the whole is, that he was frail and weak, and needed strength from on high.

24. *My knees are weak through fasting.* Hunger; want of food. Strength to stand is connected with firmness in the knee-joints, and hence weakness and feebleness are denoted by the giving way of the knees. Comp. Heb. xii. 12. ¶ *And my flesh faileth of fatness.* I am lean and weak. There is not the proper supply for my strength. The idea seems to have been that fatness (Heb., *oil*) was necessary to strength.

25. *I became also a reproach unto them.* They reproached or reviled me as a bad man. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 6. The plural here — "unto *them*"—shows that there were more than one to whom the psalm had reference, though one of them was so prominent that a considerable part of the psalm might properly be spoken of him alone. ¶ When *they looked upon me, they shaked their heads.* In contempt. See Ps. xxii. 7. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 39.

this *is* thy hand; [z] *that* thou, LORD, hast done it.

28 Let [a] them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant [b] rejoice.

29 Let [c] mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle.

30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I [d] will praise him among the multitude.

31 For he shall stand at the right [e] hand of the poor, to save *him* from [1] those that condemn his soul.

[z] Ps. xvii. 13, 14. [a] 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12. [b] Isa. lxv. 14. [c] Ps. xxxv. 26. [d] Ps. cxi. 1. [e] Ps. xvi. 8. [1] *the judges of.*

26. *Help me, O* LORD *my God,* etc. Stand by me; interpose.

27. *That they may know that this* is *thy hand.* That this has been done by thee; that it has all occurred under thy direction, or has been ordered by thee. The reference seems to be particularly to God's interposition:—"Let it be manifest to all that *thou* hast interposed in my behalf; that *thou* hast undertaken for me; that *thou* art my Friend." He desired an interposition from God that he might be vindicated before all his enemies. ¶ That *thou,* LORD, *hast done it.* Let it be such an interposition that it will be manifest to all that no other one *but* God could have done this.

28. *Let them curse, but bless thou.* See ver. 17. Let them continue to curse me, provided thou wilt bless me. I am willing to bear all these reproaches, if I may have thy favour. That favour I value infinitely more than I do theirs; and it is a small matter that I am reviled and cursed by men, if I may secure the favour and friendship of God. ¶ *When they arise.* When they rise up against me; when they attempt to persecute me. ¶ *Let them be ashamed,* etc. Let them be disappointed; let them not be successful in their designs against me. On the word *ashamed,* see Notes on Job vi. 20; Ps. xxv. 2, 3.

29. *Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame.* Let confusion and disappointment seem to cover them, so as to constitute a garment. See Notes on vers. 18, 19. They had "clothed themselves with cursing" (ver. 18), and the prayer now is, that the covering of shame might be as complete and entire. ¶ *And let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle.* As with an outer garment,—the mantle or robe,—which they might wrap all round them. Let it be so abundant that they may entirely wrap their person in it. Let their confusion correspond with their sin in the fullest manner.

30. *I will greatly praise the* LORD *with my mouth.* I will sing abundant praises to him. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 20. ¶ *Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.* In the great congregation. I will publicly acknowledge his goodness and mercy. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 25.

31. *For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor.* He will thus show that he befriends the poor and the helpless. ¶ *To save* him *from those that condemn his soul.* Marg., *from the judges of his soul.* The Hebrew is, "from those that judge his soul." The meaning is, from those that pronounce a harsh or unjust judgment; from those that condemn the innocent.

PSALM CX.

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David." It is also ascribed to David by the Saviour (Matt. xxii. 43); and by Peter (Acts ii. 34); and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title. There is nothing, however, in the title, or in the psalm, to determine at what period of David's life, or on what occasion it was written. Aben Ezra supposed that it was at the time referred to in 2 Sam. xxi. 15-17; and others have

PSALM CX.

A Psalm of David.

THE *f* LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right

f Matt. xxii. 44; Acts ii. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13.

selected other occasions in the life of David. But all this is conjecture. The psalm has no particular reference to anything in his history, and as it is wholly prophetic of the Messiah, it might have been composed at any period of his life.

The psalm is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament as referring to the Messiah, and in such a manner as to show that this was the customary interpretation among the Jews, or that it might be referred to by way of *proof* in regard to the Messiah, so that the relevancy and pertinence of the argument would be at once admitted. Matt. xxii. 44 (comp. Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42); Acts ii. 34; Heb. v. 6; vii. 17, 21. The way in which it is quoted shows that this was the prevailing and received mode of interpreting the psalm.

Yet this belief has not been uniform. De Wette supposes that it refers to David himself. Jarchi supposed that it referred to Abraham; Bornek, to Solomon; Justin Martyr and Tertullian, to Hezekiah. See Rosenmüller.

The application of the psalm in the New Testament to the Messiah is so clear and unequivocal, that we are bound to defend the opinion that it was *designed* to refer to him; and the manner in which it is quoted shows that it was in no secondary sense, and in no way of "accommodation," but that it had an original and exclusive applicability to him. Every principle of honesty in interpretation demands this. There may be difficulties in the interpretation itself, but the fact that it refers to the Messiah involves no difficulty, if it be once admitted that there is such a thing as prophecy at all, and that *any* portion of the Old Testament has reference to a Messiah. There is no part of the Old Testament that is more clearly applied to him in the New Testament than this psalm; there is no part that more naturally suggests the Messiah; there is none that is more difficult of explanation if it be maintained that it does not refer to him; there is none that is made more plain *by* referring it to him. It will be assumed, therefore, in this exposition, that the psalm *had* an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, and that the friends of revelation are bound to show that in him who claimed to be the Messiah, and to whom it *is* applied in the New Testament—the Lord Jesus—there is a *fair* fulfilment of the predictions which are contained in it.

The idea in the psalm is that of the exaltation, the conquest, the priesthood, and the dominion of the Messiah. Two things—the kingship and the priesthood of the Messiah—are combined. The leading idea is that of the *priest-king* or the *king-priest*, as in the case of Melchizedek, in whom the two offices of priest and king were in a very unusual manner and form united in one person. Usually they were separate, even in the earliest ages of the world. In the case of Melchizedek they were *combined*, and hence he was selected as a proper representative of the Messiah—of one who should combine these offices, apparently incongruous, in one.

The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. The appointment of the Messiah—acknowledged by the author of the psalm as *his* "Lord"—to that high office, to be held until he should subdue all his enemies, ver. 1.

II. His being endowed with *power* needful for the accomplishment of the design for which he was appointed, ver. 2.

III. The assurance that his people would be made "*willing*" in the day when he should put forth his power, ver. 3.

IV. The peculiar characteristic of his reign, as that of a *priest-king*, after the order of Melchizedek; combining the two functions of king and priest in his own person and office, ver. 4.

V. His conquest and triumph, vers. 5-7.

1. *The* LORD *said unto my Lord.* In the Hebrew, "Spake Jehovah to my Lord." The word *Jehovah* is the incommunicable name of God. It is never given to a created being. The other word translated *Lord—Adonai*—means one who has rule or authority; one of high rank; one who has dominion; one who is the owner or possessor, etc. This word is applied frequently to a creature. It is ap-

hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:

g Ps. xlv. 5.

rule *g* thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people *shall be* willing *h* in the day of thy power, in the

h Judges v. 2; Gal. i. 15, 16.

plied to kings, princes, rulers, masters. The phrase "*my* Lord" refers to some one who was superior in rank to the author of the psalm; one whom he could address as his superior. The psalm, therefore, cannot refer to David himself, as if Jehovah had said to *him*, "Sit thou at my right hand." Nor was there any one on earth in the time of David to whom it could be applicable; any one whom *he* would call his "Lord" or superior. If, therefore, the psalm was written by David, it must have reference to the Messiah—to one whom he owned as *his* superior—*his* Lord—*his* Sovereign. It cannot refer to God as if *he* were to have this rule over David, since God himself is referred to *as speaking* to him whom David called his Lord:—"Jehovah said unto my Lord." The reasoning of the Saviour, therefore, in Matt. xxii. 43–45, was founded on a fair and just interpretation of the psalm, and was so plain and conclusive that the Pharisees did not attempt to reply to it. Matt. xxii. 46. See Notes on that passage. No other interpretation *can* be given to it, consistently with the proper rules of expounding language, unless it be shown that the psalm was not composed by David, and might, therefore, be applied to some one whom the author would acknowledge as his "Lord." But there is no evidence of this, and there is no one in the Old Testament history to whom the psalm would be applicable. ¶ *Sit thou at my right hand.* The position of honour and of rank. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvi. 8. See also Ps. xlv. 9; Mark xiv. 62; Luke xxii. 69; Acts vii. 55; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1. The phrase is properly applicable to the Messiah as exalted to the highest place in the universe—the right hand of God. ¶ *Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* Until they are entirely subdued under thee. See Notes on Matt. xxii. 44. The enemies here referred to are the enemies of the Messiah considered as King (see Ps. ii.); and the promise here is, that "he must reign till he shall have put all enemies under his feet." See Notes on 1 Cor. xv. 25.

2. *The* LORD *shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.* The sceptre of thy power; that with which thou shalt rule. It will be given to thee by Jehovah; and it will be given to thee, as it were, *out of Zion;* that is, as proceeding from the church, and as derived from that. It will be an appointment connected with the church, and will be *as if* the church had conferred it on thee. The idea is, that the Messiah would receive, as it were, his designation, authority, commission, power from the church. He would spring from it (Isa. xi. 1); would act for it; would do what was needful for its good; would wield the power which properly belongs to the church on the earth. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 9. ¶ *Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* Set up thy power over them, and reign in them. This is a commission to set up a kingdom *in the very midst* of those who were his enemies; in the hearts of those who had been and were rebellious. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by *subduing* them so that they become his willing servants. They yield to him, and he rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but one much more difficult of execution,—to make them his friends, and to dispose them to submit to his authority. Mere *power* may crush men; it requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey.

beauties ; of holiness [1] from the
womb of the morning: thou
[2] hast the dew of thy youth.

; Ps. xcvi. 9. [1] *more than.* [2] *shalt have.*

3. *Thy people.* All who are given to thee; all over whom thou art to rule. This verse has been variously translated. The LXX. render it, "With thee is the beginning in the day of thy power, in the splendour of thy saints, from the womb, before the light of the morning have I begotten thee." So the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it, "After thy victory shall thy people willingly bring an offering to thee, in holy adorning: thy children shall be born to thee as the dew of the morning." De Wette, "Willingly shall thy people show themselves to thee on the day of the assembling of thy host in holy adorning, as from the womb of the morning, thy youth [vigour] shall be as the dew." Prof. Alexander, "Thy people (are) free-will offerings in the day of thy power, in holy decorations, from the womb of the dawn, to thee (is) the dew of thy youth." Every clause of the verse is obscure, though the *general* idea is not difficult to perceive;—that, in the day of Messiah's power, his people would willingly offer themselves to him, in holy robes or adorning, like the glittering dew of the morning;—or, in numbers that might be compared with the drops of the morning dew. The essential ideas are (1) that he would have a "people;" (2) that their subjection to him would be a "willing" subjection; (3) that this would be accomplished by his "power;" (4) that they would appear before him in great beauty—in robes of holy adorning; (5) that they would in some way resemble the dew of the morning; and (6) that to him in thus subduing them there would be the vigour of youth,—the ardour of youthful hope. ¶ Shall be *willing.* Literally, "Thy people [are, or shall be] willing-offerings." The word rendered willing—נְדָבוֹת, *nedaboth*—is in the plural number;—"thy people, *willingnesses.*" The singular —נְדָבָה, *nedabah*—means voluntariness, spontaneousness: and hence it comes to mean spontaneously, voluntarily, of a willing mind. It is rendered *a willing offering*, in Ex. xxxv. 29; *free offering*, in Ex. xxxvi. 3; *voluntary offering*, in Lev. vii. 16; *free-will offering*, in Lev. xxii. 18, 21, 23; xxiii. 38; Num. xv. 3; xxix. 39; Deut. xii. 6, 17; xvi. 10; xxiii. 23; 2 Chron. xxxi. 14; Ezra i. 4; iii. 5; viii. 28; Ps. cxix. 108; *willingly*, in 2 Chron. xxxv. 8; *plentiful*, in Ps. lxviii. 9; *voluntary*, and *voluntarily*, in Ezek. xlvi. 12; *freely*, in Hos. xiv. 4; and *free-offering*, in Amos iv. 5. It does not occur elsewhere. The idea is that of *freeness;* of voluntariness; of doing it from choice, doing it of their own will. They did it in the exercise of freedom. There was no compulsion; no constraint. Whatever "power" there was in the case, was to make them "willing," not to *compel* them to do a thing *against* their will. That which was *done*, or that which is here intended to be described as having been done, is evidently the act of devoting themselves to him who is here designated as their Ruler —the Messiah. The allusion may be either (*a*) to their devoting themselves to *him* in conversion, or becoming his; (*b*) to their devoting themselves to his *service*—as soldiers do in war; or (*c*) to their devoting their time, wealth, talents, to him in lives consecrated to him. *Whatever* there is as the result of his dominion over them is *voluntary* on their part. There is no compulsion in his religion. Men are not constrained to do what they are unwilling to do. All the power that is exerted is on the will, disposing men to do what is right, and what is for their own interest. No man is forced to go to heaven against his will; no man is saved from hell against his will; no man makes a sacrifice in religion against his will; no man is compelled to serve the Redeemer in any way against his will. The acts of religion

are among the most free that men ever perform; and of all the hosts of the redeemed no one will ever say that the act of his becoming a follower of the Redeemer was not perfectly voluntary. He *chose*—he *professed*—to be a friend of God, and he never saw the time when he regretted the choice. ¶ *In the day of thy power.* The power given to the Messiah to accomplish the work of his mission; the power to convert men, and to save the world. Matt. xxviii. 18; xi. 27; John xvii. 2. This implies (*a*) that *power* would be employed in bringing men to submit to him; and (*b*) that there would be a fixed time when that power would be put forth. Still, it is power which is not inconsistent with freedom. It is power exerted in making men *willing*, not in *compelling* or *forcing* them to submit to him. There *is* a power which may be exerted over the will consistent with liberty, and that is the power which the Messiah employs in bringing men to himself. ¶ *In the beauties of holiness.* This power will be connected with the beauty of holiness; or, holiness will be manifested when that power is put forth. The object is to *secure* holiness; and there will be beauty *in* that holiness. The only power put forth in the case is to make men holy; and they will, in their lives and conduct, manifest all the beauty or attractiveness which there is in a holy and pure character. The word rendered *beauty* is in the plural number, and the allusion *may* be to the raiment of those who are referred to. They would appear in pure garments—in sacerdotal vestments—as priests of God. Comp. Lev. xvi. 4. The idea may be that they would be a "kingdom of priests," clad in priestly vestments (Ex. xix. 6; comp. Notes on 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9), and that they would be adorned with robes appropriate to that office. This *may* refer, however, to their actual, internal holiness, and may mean that they would, when they were subjugated to him, appear *as* a holy or a righteous people. ¶ *From the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.* Marg., *more than the womb of the morning, thou shalt have,* etc. The expression here is evidently designed to refer to the source of the *dew*—the dew of the early dawn—as having its *birth* then, or as seeming to be *born* then. The morn is represented as the *mother* of the dew. The figure is highly poetic and beautiful. The ground of the comparison may be either (*a*) that the "beauty of holiness"—the beautiful array of the saints—is *more than* that produced in the womb of the morning; or (*b*) that the dew of youth is more beautiful than the dew produced in the morning. As the word *dew*, that on which the comparison must turn, occurs in the *last* member of the sentence, it is probable that the second of these interpretations is the true one, as indicated in the margin: "More than the womb of the morning (more than the morning produces) thou hast the dew of thy youth." That is, "as the young morning—the *youth* of the day—has its beauties in the abundance and lustre of the dew-drops, so shall the dew of *thy* youth be—the beginning of *thy* glorious day." May there not be here also an allusion to the *multitudes* that would be among his "people"—numerous as the dew-drops of the morning, and as beautiful as they—on his going forth to the world with all the beauty of a bright dawn? The meaning of the whole, I apprehend, is, "Thy reign shall be like the day—a long bright day. Thy coming—the morning of that day—shall be like the early dawn—so fresh, so beautiful, made so lovely by the drops of dew sparkling on every blade of grass. More beautiful by far—more lovely—shall be the beginning of the day of thy reign;—more lovely to the world *thy* youth—thy appearing—the beginning of *thy* day." Thus understood, the verse is a most beautiful poetic description of the bright morning when the Messiah should come; the dawn of that glorious day when he should reign. Comp. Isa. ix. 1–3.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou [k] *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day [l] of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places*

[k] Heb. v. 6; vi. 20: vii. 17, 21.

[l] Rom. ii. 5; Rev. vi. 17.

4. *The* LORD *hath sworn.* He has confirmed the appointment of the Messiah by a solemn oath, or *as* by an oath. That is, It is as sure and fixed *as if* he had taken an oath. Comp. Heb. vi. 13. The *time*, so to speak, if the word *time* can be applied to transactions in a past eternity, was that when he was designated in the Divine purpose as Messiah; in the eternal counsels of God. Comp. Ps. ii. 7. ¶ *And will not repent.* Will not change his purpose. ¶ *Thou* art *a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* The word rendered *order* here means properly a word, a thing, a matter; hence, a way or manner. The meaning here is, that he would be a priest *after the manner* of Melchizedek; or, such a priest as he was. He would not be of the tribe of Levi; he would not be in the regular line of the priesthood, but he would resemble, in the characteristics of his office, this ancient priest-king, combining in himself the two functions of priest *and* king; as a priest, standing alone; not deriving his authority from any line of predecessors; and having no successors. See this verse explained at length, in its application to the Messiah, in the Notes on Heb. v. 6, 10; vii. 1–3. The passage as it stands here, and as looked at without any reference to the use made of it in the New Testament, would imply these things:—(1) That he who was spoken of would be, in a proper sense, a priest. (2) That he would have a perpetual or permanent priesthood,—"for ever." (3) That he would not be of the established line of priests in the tribe of Levi, but that his appointment would be unusual and extraordinary. (4) That the appointment would come directly from God, and would not be *derived* from those who went before him. (5) That as a priest he would *resemble* Melchizedek, according to the record which was found of Melchizedek in Genesis. (6) That as Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, so *he* would be. (7) That as Melchizedek combined in himself the functions of both priest and king, so these would be found in *him.* (8) That as Melchizedek had no successors in office, so *he* would have none. How far these things were applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, and with what propriety the passage might be applied to him, may be seen by examining the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. v. vi. vii.

5. *The Lord at thy right hand.* See Notes on Ps. xvi. 8. ¶ *Shall strike through kings.* The Hebrew word here rendered *shall strike*,—from מָחַץ, *mahhatz*—means to shake, to agitate; and then, to shake in pieces, to dash in pieces, to crush; and here it has the sense of dashing in pieces, smiting, wounding, crushing. The "kings" referred to are the enemies of God and the Messiah, and the idea is that all would be subdued before him; that he would set up a universal dominion; that none would be able to stand before him; or, that he would reign over all the earth. The *language* is that which is derived from conquests in war; from the subjugation of enemies by force of arms. Comp. Notes on Ps. ii. 9–12; Isa. xi. 4. ¶ *In the day of his wrath.* Ps. ii. 12.

6. *He shall judge among the heathen.* Among the *nations.* That is, he shall set up a kingdom, or shall rule over the nations of the earth. He shall come to execute judgment and justice, and shall apportion to men what is due to them. See Notes on Isa. xi. 3–5. ¶ *He shall fill* the places *with*

with the dead bodies; he [m] shall wound the heads over [1] many countries.

m Hab. iii. 13. 1 Or, *great.*

7 He shall drink of the brook [n] in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

n Judges vii. 5, 6.

the dead bodies. He shall make a great slaughter,—indicative of conquest, and of the subjugation of the world to himself. It would be *as if* the bodies of the slain in battle strewed the ground, or filled the valleys of the earth. ¶ *He shall wound the heads.* The same word is used here that occurs in the previous verse, and that is there rendered *shall strike.* It is the language of *conquest,* as if the world was to be subdued to himself *by war.* ¶ *Over many countries.* Marg., *great.* Over vast and extensive regions,—carrying his conquests into distant lands. This will be fulfilled only when *all* the earth shall be subject to the reign of the Messiah. 1 Cor. xv. 24–28.

7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way.* The design here seems to be to represent the Messiah as a victorious king and conqueror pursuing his enemies. In the previous verse the psalmist had represented him under the image of one engaged in battle, and slaying his enemies with a great slaughter. He here represents him as pursuing those who should escape from the battle, and as pursuing them without fainting or exhaustion. He is like one who finds abundant springs and streams of water in his journeyings; who refreshes himself at those fountains and streams; who, therefore, is not faint and weary. He pursues his foes vigorously and with success. ¶ *Therefore shall he lift up the head.* Therefore shall he triumph, or be successful. The head falls when we are faint and exhausted, when we are disappointed and are ashamed, when we are conscious of guilt. It is lifted up in conscious rectitude, in success and triumph, in the exuberance of hope. The idea here is, that the Messiah would be triumphant. He would achieve the victory over all his foes; he would pursue, without exhaustion, his flying enemies, and he would return from the conquest joyous, exulting, triumphant. All this is under the image of a victorious hero; all this will be accomplished in the conquest of the world by the Gospel; in the subduing of the foes of God; in the final scene when the Redeemer shall deliver up the kingdom to God. 1 Cor. xv. 24–28.

PSALM CXI.

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is the occasion on which it was composed. It is one of the psalms, of which there are in all ten in number, that commence with the phrase *Hallelu-jah* in the Hebrew; in our version rendered, *Praise ye the Lord.* Those psalms are the cvi., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxxxv., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., cl. The use of this phrase shows that the psalms where it is found were designed for public worship. It is probable that this was one of the later psalms,—a fact that might be indicated by the very use of this phrase *Hallelujah.* Venema supposes that it was composed in the time of the Maccabees, but of this there is no evidence.

This is one of the alphabetical psalms. In that class of psalms there is considerable variety. In some a letter of the Hebrew alphabet commences each verse in the psalm; in others, the successive letters of the alphabet begin each two or three verses in succession, or, as in Ps. cxix., eight verses in succession; in others, the successive letters of the alphabet are used in the beginning of separate clauses of the *verses* of a psalm.

The peculiarity of this psalm is that the first eight verses of the psalm contain *two* clauses, beginning with the letters of the alphabet taken in their order; the last two verses, *three.* Why this arrangement was adopted, it is impossible now to determine,—as it is in regard to *many* things which are thought to be beauties in poetry. There is very much in the measure, the rhythm, the rhyme, of modern poetry, that is quite

PSALM CXI.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart, in the assembly [o] of the upright, and *in* the congregation.

2 The works [p] of the LORD *are* great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3 His work *is* honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

[1] *Hallelujah.* [o] Ps. cix. 30. [p] Job xxxvi. 24; Ps. xcii. 5; Rev. xv. 3.

as artificial, and quite as inexplicable, as this.

The psalm is a call to the praise of God on account of his *works*, and is designed to suggest grounds of confidence in him as drawn *from* those works. It is, therefore, of universal applicability; and may be used in any nation, at any time, and among any people. It is a psalm which may be translated into all the languages of the world, and whatever language men may speak, it would express in their own tongue what they have occasion to give thanks for in the various lands where they dwell.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Marg., *Hallelujah.* See Ps. cvi. 1. ¶ *I will praise the* LORD *with* my *whole heart.* With undivided affections; holding back nothing. I will allow nothing to be in my heart that would interfere with the fulness of praise; no coldness or dividedness of affection; no love for other things that would deaden my love for God; no suspicion respecting him that would chill my ardour; no unbelief that would drag me down to earth, while the language of my lips ascended to God. See Notes on Ps. lxxxvi. 12. ¶ *In the assembly of the upright.* With the righteous when they are gathered together for public worship. ¶ *And* in *the congregation.* See Ps. xxii. 22, 25; lxvi. 13; lxxxix. 5.

2. *The works of the* LORD are *great.* They are great in number; great in magnitude; great in wisdom; great in goodness. This language was appropriate in the time of the psalmist, when men looked upon the heavens with the naked eye alone, and when they had very imperfect views of the real magnitude of the universe as it is now disclosed by the telescope. It is entirely appropriate now, and conveys a more solemn and sublime impression than it would in the time of the psalmist. It will still be appropriate under the larger views which may yet be obtained of the universe by more perfect instruments, by more accurate observation, and by more profound study. And it will be appropriate when men shall survey the greatness of the universe from the heights of heaven. ¶ *Sought out of all them.* Studied by all such. ¶ *That have pleasure therein.* More literally, "Sought to all their wishes." Perhaps the meaning is, that they would find all their desires gratified in those works; they would find in them all that they would *wish* to find respecting the power, wisdom, goodness, and majesty of God. Still it implies that they *have* a desire thus to study his works, or that they *do find* a pleasure in examining the proofs of the being and attributes of God *in* his works. A man who loves God will have real pleasure in studying his works as well as his word; and it is as proper to find pleasure in the one as in the other,—as proper to wish to find the knowledge which the one imparts as that which the other bestows. One great error among the friends of God is the neglect to study his *works.* In doing this, men need not neglect or undervalue the Bible and the knowledge which it gives, for such studies would be among the best means of illustrating the Bible.

3. *His work* is *honourable and glorious.* Literally, "Honour and glory is his work;" that is, All that he *does* is honourable and glorious. The language would cover all that God does in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. There is honour—there is majesty—in *every-*

4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.

5 He [q] hath given [1] meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

7 The works of his hands *are*

[q] Matt. vi. 26, 33.

[1] *prey.*

thing that he does. ¶ *And his righteousness endureth for ever.* That is, It will be found in all the investigations of his works, that he is unchangeably righteous or just. All that he has done, or that he now does, goes to demonstrate this. There are doings of men—even of good men—which will not bear investigation; but there are no such acts of God. There are things that men do which excite admiration only when there is no investigation in regard to them; but the works of God are admired the more, the more they are studied. There are things which appear beautiful, or appear sweet only when they are not shaken; a collection of perfumes will give out sweets the more it is stirred.

4. *He hath made his wonderful works.* In heaven and in earth. ¶ *To be remembered.* Literally, "Memory hath he made for his wonderful works." *They* are so made, that man may remember them; the memory of man, also, is so made, that it may retain them. The highest and most appropriate exercise of memory is to retain the lessons which the works of God inculcate; to treasure up for gratitude and for use what he teaches his intelligent creation through those works. Memory can never be better employed than in treasuring up the truths which the Creator teaches in his providential dealings with us, and in his word. How much better would it be for man if he laboured more to *remember* these things; if he sought to *forget* many of those things which he is so careful now to retain in his recollection. ¶ *The* LORD *is gracious,* etc. See Notes on Ps. lxxxvi. 5. This is stated here as the *result* of the careful study of the doings of God; as the conclusion to which all will come who carefully study his works. *Illustrations* of what God has done that deserves to be remembered occupy the remainder of the psalm, except the last verse.

5. *He hath given meat unto them that fear him.* Marg., *prey.* The idea is, that he has supplied their wants. The Hebrew word is, *prey,* and the allusion is to the mode in which the wants of the beasts of the field are supplied. The meaning *may* be that they had obtained this from their enemies, as beasts of prey take their food by making war; or the word may be used in a general sense, as meaning that God had supplied their wants. ¶ *He will ever be mindful of his covenant.* He will never leave or forsake his people; he will be faithful to all the promises that he has made to them.

6. *He hath showed his people.* The Jewish people. He has made this known to them. The reference here is not to his *announcing* it, or *stating* it, but to his acts of interposition in their behalf in which he had manifested the greatness of his power. ¶ *The power of his works.* The power of his acts; the power involved in what he does. The power referred to here was that which was evinced in destroying the Egyptians, and in subduing the nations of Canaan. ¶ *That he may give them the heritage of the heathen.* The nations; to wit, the nations of Palestine. The word *heritage* is often used in the large sense of possessions; and the meaning here is, that God had shown the greatness of his power by giving all that they possessed into the hands of his people.

7. *The works of his hands.* All that he does in the works of creation and providence;—all in his

verity and judgment: all [r] his commandments *are* sure.

8 They [1] stand fast for ever and ever, *and are* done in truth and uprightness.

[r] Ps. xix. 7. [1] are *established.*

9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy [s] and reverend *is* his name.

10 The [t] fear of the LORD *is*

[s] Deut. xxviii. 58.
[t] Job xxviii. 28; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; Ec. xii. 13.

acts towards the children of men. ¶ Are *verity.* Truth. That is, They tend to establish and confirm the truth; they are done in the cause or the defence of truth. Truth in any case may be ascertained by what God *does,*—for all that he defends and protects is *truth,* and his acts, therefore, may be regarded as an expression of what is true and right. ¶ *And judgment.* In the cause of justice; or, in maintaining the principles of right. God never does anything to vindicate wrong. None of his acts can be fairly interpreted as having been done to sustain injustice, fraud, deceit, ambition, oppression, murder, or licentiousness. That he suffers free agents to do these things without interference is no evidence that he approves of them. That he *disapproves* of them is shown (*a*) by his declarations; (*b*) by his threatenings; (*c*) by all that he does to punish the wicked here. ¶ *All his commandments* are *sure.* His statutes; his ordinances. They are *sure;* that is, they are to be relied on; or, are worthy of confidence.

8. *They stand fast for ever and ever.* Marg., *established.* The Hebrew word means *sustained, supported.* They will not fail or fall. Whatever else may be shaken, his law, his word, and the principles of his administration, will not fail. See Notes on Matt. v. 18. Comp. Luke xvi. 17; Matt. xxiv. 35. The great principles of truth and righteousness will stand, and whatever is founded on those principles will endure for ever. ¶ And are *done in truth and uprightness.* Are based on truth, or on a just view of things; they are done in such a way that truth will be maintained and promoted. The word *uprightness* here means that all this is done on the principles of equity—of what *ought* to be done, or what is *best* to be done. Comp. Ps. xix. 9.

9. *He sent redemption unto his people.* In their deliverance from Egypt. He has now sent it in a higher sense under the great Deliverer, the Saviour. ¶ *He hath commanded his covenant for ever.* He has ordained or appointed it. The covenant is here represented as if it were obedient to the will of God, or under his control. The covenant refers to his arrangements with his people;—his assurances of favour, with the terms on which that favour will be shown. ¶ *Holy and reverend is his name.* Holy and to be venerated; literally, "*to be feared.*" That is, he has shown in all this that he is holy, and that he is a Being who is to be had in reverence.

10. *The fear of the* LORD. Reverence for God; respect for his law, his will, his government, himself; the fear of offending him, which will lead us to do right. This fear is not that of a slave; it is not mere dread; it is not terror. It is consistent with love, and springs from it. It is consistent with calmness of mind, and promotes it. It does not produce terror, but rather delivers from it, and preserves the mind from alarms. The word here rendered *fear* is a noun of the same origin as the word rendered *reverend* in the previous verse. The suggestion to the mind of the psalmist that the "name of the Lord" was "*reverend,*" or was to be venerated, introduced this thought that such reverence is the very foundation of wisdom. ¶ Is *the beginning of wisdom.* The foundation, the origin, the commencement of being truly wise. It is so. There is no

the beginning of wisdom: [1] a good understanding have all they that do [2] *his commandments*: his praise endureth for ever.

[1] Or, *good success*, Prov. iii. 4. [2] *them*.

PSALM CXII.

PRAISE [3] ye the LORD. Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the

[3] *Hallelujah*.

true wisdom which does not recognize the being, the perfections, and the claims of God. The highest wisdom—the most lofty endowment of man—is that he *may* know and honour God. This, in capability, makes him wise above the brute creation; this, in exercise, makes one man more wise than another; this, when it springs up in the soul, makes a man more wise than he was before—or, is the *beginning* of true wisdom in the soul. Comp. Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; Deut. iv. 6; Job xxviii. 28; Ecc. xii. 13. ¶ *A good understanding*, etc. Marg., *good success*. The original word—שֵׂכֶל, *sēchĕl*—is rendered *understanding* (as here) in 1 Sam. xxv. 3; Ezra viii. 18; Job xvii. 4; Prov. iii. 4; xiii. 15; xvi. 22; *wisdom* in 1 Chron. xxii. 12; Prov. xii. 8; xxiii. 9; *prudence*, 2 Chron. ii. 12; Prov. xix. 11 (marg.); *sense*, in Neh. viii. 8; *knowledge*, 2 Chron. xxx. 22; and *policy* in Dan. viii. 25. It *may* denote, therefore, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, success, prudence; and it is true in regard to *all* of these, —for the fear of the Lord, or true religion, produces them *all*. It is not necessary, therefore, to endeavour to ascertain precisely which of these is the meaning here. ¶ *That do* his commandments. Marg., as in the Heb., *do them*. That do the things connected with the fear of the Lord; that is, who obey God. ¶ *His praise endureth for ever*. That is, the foundation for his praise endures to all eternity; or, is unchangeable. As God is always the same, so there is, as derived from his being and perfections, always the same foundation for praise. As there will always be created beings who can and will appreciate this, so it will be literally true, as it should be, that his praise *will* be celebrated for ever.

PSALM CXII.

The author of this psalm, as of the preceding, is unknown, and equally with that it is impossible now to ascertain the time or the occasion of its composition. It is a psalm of the same structure as that, with the same number of verses; like that, it is alphabetical in its form, and composed in the same manner,—the first eight verses with *two* clauses each, beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet,—and the last two verses with *three* clauses, beginning, in like manner, with three letters of the alphabet in succession. This peculiarity of structure makes it highly probable that it was composed by the same author.

It is further to be noticed that this psalm *begins* where the other *ends*, with the happiness or blessedness of "fearing God," and is designed to set forth that blessedness, or to show what are the advantages of true religion. This fact makes it further probable that the two psalms were composed by the same author.

This psalm is very simple in its structure. It sets forth the advantages or benefits of the fear of the Lord, or of religion in respect (*a*) to the posterity of the man, ver. 2; (*b*) in securing wealth, ver. 3; (*c*) in the light which springs up in darkness, ver. 4; (*d*) in the discretion with which such a man is enabled to manage his affairs, ver. 5; (*e*) in the firmness and composure of his mind in times of danger and trouble, vers. 6–8; (*f*) in his being so prosperous, and so exalted, that he will become an object of envy to the wicked, vers. 9, 10.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Marg., as in Heb., *Hallelujah*. See Notes on Ps. cvi. 1. ¶ *Blessed* is *the man*. Heb., *The blessings of the man*. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. That is, Blessed, or happy, is such a one. ¶ That *feareth the* LORD. In Ps. cxi. 10, the psalmist had referred to "the fear of the Lord" as "the beginning of wisdom," and had *alluded* to the success, prosperity, or happiness which

LORD, *that* delighteth [u] greatly in his commandments.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 Unto the upright there ariseth [v] light in the darkness: *he is* gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

[u] Ps. i. 1—3; cxix. 16.

[v] Ps. xcvii. 11; Isa. lviii. 10.

attends the fear of the Lord, or true religion. This psalm is designed more fully to *illustrate* that thought. ¶ That *delighteth greatly in his commandments.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2. It is a characteristic of true piety to find pleasure in the commands of God;—in the commandments themselves, and in obedience to them.

2. *His seed shall be mighty upon earth.* His children; his posterity. That is, they shall be prospered; honoured; distinguished among men:—distinguished for their virtues, for their influence, for their success in life. This refers to what was regarded among the Hebrews as an object of great desire, and is in accordance with the promises everywhere found in their Scriptures. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 13; xxxvii. 25, 26. Comp. Gen. xii. 2; xvii. 6; Ex. xx. 6. It is in accordance, also, with a general fact in the course of events. The best security for the virtue and success of children is the virtue and the piety of parents; the surest inheritance as pertaining to happiness, respectability, and usefulness in life, is that which is derived from the example, the prayers, the counsel of a pious father and mother. ¶ *The generation of the upright shall be blessed.* The family; the children. Such promises are to be expected to be fulfilled *in general;* it is not required by any proper rules of interpreting language that this should be universally and always true.

3. *Wealth and riches* shall be *in his house.* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "*glory* and riches shall be in his house." The word, however, properly means riches or wealth, and the two terms are used apparently to convey the idea that wealth or property in *varied forms* would be in his house; that is, not merely gold and silver, but all that was understood to constitute wealth—variety of garments, articles of furniture, etc. This promise is of the same nature as that of the previous verse. It pertains to a *general* truth in regard to the influence of religion in promoting prosperity. Comp. Notes on 1 Tim. iv. 8. ¶ *And his righteousness endureth for ever.* That is, The effects of it shall be transmitted from age to age in the prosperity, the respectability, the wealth, the happiness of his descendants. It travels on from age to age, and blesses distant generations.

4. *Unto the upright.* The just; the pious; the man who fears God. ¶ *There ariseth light in the darkness.* This is a new form of the blessing which follows the fear of the Lord, or another of the benefits which spring from true religion, and by which the pious man is distinguished from other men. The distinction is *not* that days of darkness will not come upon him as well as upon others; for he may be sick as others are, he may be bereaved as others are, he may lose his property as others do,—since there are general laws that affect mankind in these respects. God has not promised that he will interpose to save his people *from* these things, but that he will save them *in* them. The peculiarity in regard to those who fear God is, that these things will not always continue; that they shall not be overwhelmed by them; that it will not be uninterrupted and unmitigated gloom; that the sky shall not be always overcast. Comp. Notes on Ps. xcvii. 11; Job xi. 17. ¶ He is *gracious, and*

5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: *w* he will guide his affairs [1] with discretion. *x*

w Luke vi. 35. [1] *judgment.*

6 Surely he *y* shall not be moved for ever: the righteous

x Eph. v. 15. *y* Ps. xv. 5.

full of compassion, and righteous. These words are designed to be applied to the "upright" man, and are intended more fully to designate his character, and to show *why* light shall spring up to him when he is in darkness. It is because his character is *really* pure and holy, so that whatever cloud may come over it for a time, however it may be temporarily obscured, however he may be calumniated by men, or however God may for a time seem to forsake him and to treat him as if he were a bad man, yet ultimately his character will appear as it really is. Light will come in upon the darkness. The clouds will break away. The prejudices against him will be dispersed. Full justice will be done to his character both by man and by God, and the world will see that he is a just and pious man. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6. Every man will ultimately be seen as he is; every man will attain the position, and have the reputation which he *ought* to have.

5. *A good man showeth favour.* He has the means to show favour to others, or to promote their welfare, and he is disposed to do this. It is the characteristic of a good man—of a heart that is truly pious—to do good to others; to promote their welfare here, and to assist them in their endeavour to secure happiness in the world to come. ¶ *And lendeth.* The original word here—לָוָה, *lavah*—means to join oneself to any one; to cleave to him; then, to form the union which is constituted between debtor and creditor, borrower and lender. Here it is used in the latter sense, and it means that a good man will accommodate another—a neighbour—with money, or with articles to be used temporarily and returned again. A man who always *borrows* is not a desirable neighbour; but a man who never lends—who is never willing to accommodate—is a neighbour that no one would wish to live near—a crooked, perverse, bad man. True religion will always dispose a man to do acts of kindness in any and every way possible. ¶ *He will guide his affairs.* The word here used means literally to hold, contain; to hold up, or sustain; to nourish, to furnish the means of living. Gen. xlv. 11; xlvii. 12; l. 21. Here it means that he would uphold or *manage* his business. ¶ *With discretion.* Marg., *judgment;* so the Hebrew. He would do it prudently, sensibly, economically, wisely. This is, or should be, one of the characteristics of a good man. Religion prompts to this; religion will aid a man in doing this; religion will tend to check everything of a contrary nature. A man who neglects his "affairs," who pays no attention to his business, who is indifferent whether he is successful or fails, is a man who gives *just so much evidence* that he is a stranger to true religion.

6. *Surely he shall not be moved for ever.* Luther, "For he shall remain always." He shall be fixed, stable, firm, prosperous. He shall not be driven from place to place. He shall have a permanent home. He shall have a steady reputation. He shall have a constant influence. He shall be a firm, established, prosperous man. Of course this is to be taken in the general, and should not be pressed to mean that it will be, in the most literal sense, and always, true; for a good man *may* be "unfortunate in business," and suffer with others; he may be sick; he may see reason to change his residence; he will certainly die. But still it is true that religion *tends* to produce this permanency, and that in this respect there is a marked difference between men who

shall be in everlasting remembrance.

7 He [z] shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.

9 He hath dispersed; he hath

[z] Prov. iii. 25, 26.

are truly pious, and those who are not. ¶ *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* In Prov. x. 7, it is said that "the name of the wicked shall rot;" and the meaning here is, that the way to secure a grateful remembrance among men after we are dead is to be righteous, —to do something that shall deserve to be remembered. It cannot mean that a man who is righteous will *never* be forgotten, or that his name and deeds will never pass from the recollection of mankind,—for that would not be true; but that men will delight to cherish the memory of the righteous; that they will be disposed to do justice to their character after they are dead; that the benevolent and the upright will be remembered when the names of the wicked shall be forgotten. The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of bad men, and as soon as it can be done hastens to forget them. Wicked men are remembered only when their deeds are enormous, and then their memory is cherished only to admonish and to warn. The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of Benedict Arnold, or Alexander VI., or Cæsar Borgia, except to warn future generations of the guilt and baseness of treason and profligacy; it *has* an interest in never suffering the names of Howard, of Wilberforce, of Henry Martyn, to die, for those names excite to noble feelings and to noble efforts wherever they are known. Such names are to be had "in everlasting remembrance."

7. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.* Of bad news; of reverses and losses; of the destruction of his ship at sea, or his property by land; of disaster by flood, by famine, by war. His heart will so fully confide in God that he can commit all calmly into his hands. He will feel assured that all will be well; that nothing occurs but that which the wisest and the best Being in the universe sees it best should occur; and that in all which *does* take place he is able to sustain the sufferer. There is nothing so well fitted to make the mind calm as trust in God. What has a man to be afraid of who does trust in him? Comp. Ps. xxvii. 3; xlvi. 2; lvi. 3, 4; Heb. xiii. 6; Prov. i. 33. ¶ *His heart is fixed.* Is firm; is established. See Notes on Ps. lvii. 7. ¶ *Trusting in the* LORD. This is the reason *why* his heart is "fixed" or firm. It is not any native courage or resolution; it is not any firmness of his own; it is simply because he has confidence in God, and feels assured that all things will be well.

8. *His heart* is *established.* Sustained; upheld. This is the same idea, though somewhat varied in form. The word means to sustain; to support; and the idea is, that there is some basis of support—some strength —which is not his own. ¶ *He shall not be afraid.* When he is assailed by enemies. ¶ *Until he see* his desire *upon his enemies.* This implies that he had nothing really to fear. He would certainly overcome his foes; and in the mean time he might look calmly on all their efforts to destroy him, for those efforts would be vain. So the believer now looks calmly on all his spiritual foes. He has nothing to fear, for he will overcome them all; he will certainly triumph; he will trample them all under his feet. He may well, therefore, endure these conflicts for a brief period, for the issue is certain, and the conflict will soon come to an end.

9. *He hath dispersed,* etc. This is another characteristic of a righteous man, and another reason of the per-

given to the poor; his [a] righteousness [b] endureth for ever: his horn shall be exalted with honour.

10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved; he shall gnash [c] with his teeth, and melt away; the [d] desire of the wicked shall perish.

a Deut. xxiv. 13. *b* Rev. xxii. 11. *c* Luke xiii. 28. *d* Prov. xi. 7.

manent honour which will be rendered to him. The meaning is, that he is liberal; he freely scatters what he has; he divides it with those who are needy and unfortunate. One part of mankind have an overplus — have more than they need for themselves and their families—and that overplus is what is designed to meet the wants of the unfortunate, the weak, the aged, the imbecile, the infirm, who have *not* enough. It is the *treasury* of God—the *reservoir* where that is gathered which is to be distributed for the wants of the helpless and the dependent. The righteous man is one who enters fully into this arrangement, and who feels that all this overplus belongs to God, and is to be appropriated as he shall direct. ¶ *His righteousness endureth for ever.* His acts of charity are constant. His piety is not fitful, spasmodic, uncertain; it is steady principle; it is firm and solid; it may always be relied on. See ver. 3. ¶ *His horn shall be exalted with honour.* See Notes on Ps. lxxv. 10.

10. *The wicked shall see* it, *and be grieved.* They shall see his prosperity; shall see the evidence that God approves his character and his conduct. The word rendered *grieved* means rather to be angry or enraged. Perhaps the word *fret* would best express the sense. ¶ *He shall gnash with his teeth.* As indicative of hatred and wrath. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 12. ¶ *And melt away.* Disappear, —as snow does that melts; or as a snail (see Notes on Ps. lviii. 8); or as waters that run away (see Notes on Ps. lviii. 7); or as wax (see Notes on Ps. lxviii. 2). Their wrath shall be of no avail, for they themselves shall soon disappear. ¶ *The desire of the wicked shall perish.* He shall not be able to accomplish his desire, or to carry out his purposes. He shall be disappointed, and all his cherished plans will come to nought. This is in strong contrast with what is said in the psalm would occur to the righteous. They would be prospered and happy; they would be able to carry out their plans; they would be respected while living, and remembered when dead; they would find God interposing in their behalf in the darkest hours; they would be firm and calm in the day of danger and of trouble; they would put their trust in the Lord, and all would be well. Surely there is an advantage in our world in being a friend of God.

PSALM CXIII.

The author of this psalm, as of those which immediately precede it, is unknown. It is very general in its character, and has no allusion to any circumstances by which one could determine the name of the author, or the occasion on which it was written. In connexion with the five following psalms, it constitutes what was known among the Hebrews as the *Hallel;* that is, the song of praise, sung on great occasions, at the annual festivals, and especially at the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Buxtorf, *Lex. Tal.*, p. 613, *et seq.*

This psalm, which is expressive of the majesty of God, as having a claim to universal praise, consists essentially of two parts:—

I. The general statement that God is to be praised, and a call on all to engage in that service, vers. 1-3.

II. Reasons why he should be praised, vers. 4–9. (1.) He is exalted above all nations, ver. 4; (2.) None can be compared with him, ver. 5; (3.) He is condescending, and looks with interest on the things in heaven and on earth, ver. 6; (4.) He exalts the poor to positions of honour and influence, vers. 7, 8; (5.) He constitutes and appoints families, with all that is tender and joyous in the domestic relation, ver. 9.

PSALM CXIII.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore.

3 From [e] the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, the LORD'S name *is* to be praised.

4 The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens.

5 Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who [2] dwelleth on high;

[1] *Hallelujah.* [e] Isa. lix. 19; Mal. i. 11.

[2] *exalteth* himself *to dwell.*

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Marg., as in Heb., *Hallelujah.* See Notes on Ps. cvi. 1. ¶ *Praise, O ye servants of the* LORD. You who profess to serve and obey him; who acknowledge him as your God. In the original this is also the word *Hallelu,* הַלְלוּ. ¶ *Praise the name of the* LORD. Still the same word *Hallelu.* The *name* of the Lord is put here, as it is often, for the Lord himself.

2. *Blessed be the name of the* LORD. Blessed be the Lord; or, *Let* the name of the Lord be blessed. ¶ *From this time forth and for evermore.* Now and for ever. He is worthy of praise now, and he ever will be. What he is now, he will always continue to be; and as praise is proper now, it will be for ever and ever. An eternal God has claims to eternal praise.

3. *From the rising of the sun,* etc. From the farthest east to the farthest west,—the sun in its rising and setting being the remotest object that we see in the horizon. ¶ *The* LORD'S *name* is *to be praised.* This does not mean that it *will* be—though that is true; but that it *ought* to be,—that it is worthy of universal praise. All men in the east and in the west—everywhere—*should* praise and adore that name.

4. *The* LORD is *high above all nations.* Heb., Exalted above all nations is Jehovah. That is, he rules over all nations; he directs their affairs; he is their sovereign king .As a matter of fact, and from the necessity of the case, he is on a throne which is elevated above all the kings and kingdoms of the world. He is the Sovereign not only of one nation, but of all; and it is meet that this should be acknowledged by them all. ¶ And *his glory above the heavens.* That which renders him glorious. The manifestations of his glorious character are not confined to the earth; they extend to the heavens;—they are not confined to the visible heavens; they extend far beyond, in the regions of illimitable space. The universe—the earth and the starry worlds—all are full of the manifestations of his glory; and far beyond the bounds of created things (if they have a boundary), God is there—without limit—the same God—worthy there of universal praise! Who can comprehend such a God? Comp. Notes on Ps. viii. 1.

5. *Who* is *like unto the* LORD *our God?* Who can be compared with Jehovah our God? See Notes on Isa. xl. 17–25. The meaning is, that no creature—no idol—can be compared with Jehovah. The remark here has special reference to his attributes as immediately specified—his humbling himself to behold the things in heaven and in earth; his raising up the poor, etc. It is true *in general,* in regard to God, that no creature can be compared with him; it is true, in regard to each one of his attributes, that they are far above all created excellence. ¶ *Who dwelleth on high.* Marg., *exalteth himself to dwell.* Literally, "The one making high to sit." The language is applicable to one who is seated on a lofty throne. Comp. Ps. viii. 1. He has his dwelling—his throne—his permanent seat—in the heavens:—

6 Who *f* humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!

7 He *g* raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

8 That he may set *him* with princes, *even* with the princes *h* of his people.

9 He maketh the barren wo-

f Isa. lvii. 15. *g* 1 Sam. ii. 8. *h* Ps. xlv. 16.

so high and exalted that it requires infinite condescension to look upon the earth, or even upon the heavens.

6. *Who humbleth* himself, etc. So high that it is necessary he *should* stoop even to behold the things which seem most lofty to us; and who actually *does* stoop thus to regard the things which he has made in heaven and on earth. ¶ *To behold* the things that are *in heaven, and in the earth!* More literally, "to look in heaven and in earth." Even to look on heaven, high as it is to us,—still more to look on earth, so insignificant as compared with the vast bodies in the heavens,—is condescension on the part of God. It requires him to stoop—even to look on the sun—the stars—the distant worlds! Yet he does this. There is not a world which he does not survey constantly; not a creature whose interests he does not regard; not an insect—a flower—an atom—that he does not regard with as much minute attention as though there were nothing else to demand his care.

7. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust.* From the most humble condition in life. He exalts them to conditions of wealth, rank, honour. He has *power* to do this; he actually *does* it. This is not intended to be affirmed as a universal truth, or to assert that it is always done, but that it is among the things which show his majesty, his power, and his goodness, and which lay the foundation for praise. ¶ And *lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.* From the condition of lowest poverty. Instances are sufficiently abundant in which this is done, to justify such an assertion, and to show that it is a proper foundation of praise to God.

8. *That he may set* him *with princes.* May give him a rank—a position—with nobles and great men upon the earth. Many instances of this nature have occurred in the history of the world. Not a few of the nobles of England, including several of its lord chancellors, have been raised thus from very humble life; and in every nation God shows that he has power to give to those of humblest rank a name and place which no hereditary titles and honours can bestow: thus Shakspeare was the son of a glover and woolstapler. God has power to come into the humblest cottage of poverty, and to bring forth those who shall stand foremost in their generation as men of genius and power. Nothing is more absolute than the power which God thus holds over the nations of the earth, and it is meet that a Being who has this power, and who exercises it, should be praised and honoured. ¶ Even *with the princes of his people.* Among those who are selected to preside over the people whom he has chosen for himself. It is implied here that this would be a higher honour than to be exalted to power among a heathen people—a people ignorant of the true God. It is a higher honour to be counted worthy to rule a Christian nation than a heathen people; it is a higher honour to be a ruler in the church—over those whom God has redeemed for himself—than it is to administer a secular government.

9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house,* etc. Marg., as in Heb., *to dwell in a house.* That is, to be at the head of a family. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 6. Comp. 1 Sam. ii. 5. This, too, is suggested as a reason why God should be praised and adored. In instances where all hope of posterity is cut off, he interposes, and diffuses

man to [1] keep house, *and to be* a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

[1] *dwell in an.*

joy through a dwelling. We may look abroad, and see abundant occasion for praising God,—in his condescension to human affairs,—in his lifting up the poor from the humblest condition,—in his exalting those of lowly rank to places of honour, trust, wealth, and power; but, after all, if we wish to find occasions of praise that will most tenderly affect the heart, and be connected with the warmest affections of the soul, they will be most likely to be found in the domestic circle—in the mutual love—the common joy—the tender feelings—which bind together the members of a family. In such a family, the words with which this psalm begins and ends, "Hallelujah," "Hallelujah," are peculiarly appropriate; and if any community on earth should apply these words to itself it should be such a family, called upon by everything tender, holy, and lovely, to *praise the* LORD.

PSALM CXIV.

This psalm, a part of the Hallel (see Notes on the Introd. to Ps. cxiii.), is occupied in celebrating the praises of God for what he had done in the delivering of his people from Egyptian bondage, and in conducting them to the promised land. It is the language of exultation, joy, and triumph, in view of the gracious interpositions of God in their deliverance. The psalmist sees the mountains and hills seized as it were with consternation, leaping and skipping like sheep; Jordan, as it were, frightened and fleeing back; the very earth trembling,—at the presence of God. Everything is personified. Everything is full of life; everything recognizes the presence and the power of the Most High. It would be appropriate to use such a psalm on the great festivals of the Jewish nation, for nothing could be more proper than to keep these events in their history before the minds of the people.

The author of the psalm is unknown; and the occasion on which it was composed cannot now be determined. It is a most animated, elevated, cheering psalm, and is proper to be used at all times to make the mind rejoice in God, and to impress us with the feeling that it is easy for God to accomplish his purposes.

PSALM CXIV.

WHEN [i] Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,[k]

2 Judah [l] was his sanctuary, *and* [m] Israel his dominion.

[i] Ex. xii. 41. [k] Ps. lxxxi. 5. [l] Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. [m] Deut. xxxii. 9.

1. *When Israel went out of Egypt.* Literally, "In the going out of Israel from Egypt." This is not to be confined to the exact act of the exodus, but embraces all that properly entered into that migration,—the whole train of events which resulted in their being brought into the promised land. ¶ *The house of Jacob.* The family of Jacob,—a name appropriately used here, since it was the family of Jacob that had gone down into Egypt, and that had increased to these great numbers. ¶ *From a people of strange language.* Speaking a foreign or a barbarian tongue. See Notes on Ps. lxxxi. 5.

2. *Judah was his sanctuary.* His home; his abode; his sacred dwelling-place. Judah was the principal or leading tribe, recognized as the tribe where power was to be concentrated, and from which the Messiah was to proceed (Gen. xlix. 8–12); and hence the name was early used to denote the entire people, and ultimately, as modified in the word *Jews*, became the common name of the nation. ¶ And *Israel his dominion.* The nation that he ruled; the nation that had his law; the nation that he governed by his presence,—or, of which he was the recognized king. There can be no doubt that the reference here is to God, but it is remark-

3 The sea saw [n] *it*, and fled: Jordan [o] was driven back.

4 The mountains [p] skipped like rams, *and* the little hills like lambs.

5 What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?

6 Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams; *and* ye little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, [q] thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

[n] Ex. xiv. 21. [o] Jos. iii. 13, 16. [p] Hab. iii. 6, 8. [q] Micah vi. 1, 2.

able that the name "God" is not used. Perhaps the reason may be that this psalm was designed to be employed in connexion with the preceding one, and as that consists entirely of the praises of God, it was not necessary to repeat the name when his praise was to be continued under another form, and in connexion with another line of thought.

3. *The sea saw it.* The word *it* is supplied, not very properly, by our translators. It would be more expressive to say, "The sea saw:" that is, The sea—(the Red Sea)—saw the mighty movement—the marshalled hosts—the moving masses—the cattle—the pursuing enemies—the commotion—the agitation—on its usually quiet shores. We are to conceive of the usual calmness of the desert—the waste and lonely solitudes on the banks of the Red Sea,—and then all this suddenly broken in upon by vast hosts of men, women, children, and cattle, fleeing in consternation, followed by the embattled strength of Egypt,—all rolling on tumultuously to the shore. No wonder that the sea is represented as astonished at this unusual spectacle, and as fleeing in dismay. ¶ *And fled.* As if affrighted at the approach of such an host, coming so suddenly upon its shores. ¶ *Jordan was driven back.* Referring to the dividing of the waters of the Jordan when the children of Israel passed over to the promised land. Josh. iii. 13–17. They also seemed astonished at the approach of the Hebrews, and retired to make a way for them to pass over.

4. *The mountains skipped like rams.* As flocks in their gambols. They seemed to move from place to place; everything seemed to be unsettled, and acknowledged the presence of the Omnipotent One. The word rendered *skipped* means to leap for joy; to dance. See Notes on Ps. xxix. 6. The reference here is to the agitations and commotions of the peaks of Sinai, when God came down to deliver the law. Ex. xix. 16–18. ¶ And *the little hills like lambs.* Heb., Like the sons of the flock. The reference here is to the less prominent eminences of Sinai. The lofty hills, and the smaller hills surrounding, seemed to be all in a state of commotion.

5, 6. *What* ailed *thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?* etc. Literally, "What to thee, O sea," etc. That is, What influenced thee,—what alarmed thee,—what put thee into such fear, and caused such consternation? Instead of *stating* the cause or reason why they were thus thrown into dismay, the psalmist uses the language of surprise, as if these inanimate objects had been smitten with sudden terror, and as if it were proper to ask an explanation from themselves in regard to conduct that seemed so strange.

7. *Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,* etc. This is at the same time an explanation of the facts referred to in the previous verses, and the statement of an important truth in regard to the power of God. The true explanation—as here implied—of what occurred to the sea, to the Jordan, to the mountains, and to the hills, was the fact *that God was there;* the inference from that, or the truth which followed from that, was, that before that God in whose presence the very mountains shook, and from whom the waters of the sea fled in alarm, the whole earth should tremble.

8 Which [r] turned the rock *into* a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

[r] Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 11.

8. *Which turned the rock* into *a standing water.* That is, Before him who could do this, the earth should tremble; the inhabited world should stand in awe of such amazing power. The words rendered *a standing water,* mean properly *a pool of water.* They indicate nothing in regard to the *permanency* of that pool; they do not imply that it remained *as* a standing pool during the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness,—whatever may have been the fact in regard to that. The simple idea is, that, at the time referred to, the rock was converted into a pool; that is, the waters flowed from the rock, constituting such a pool. ¶ *The flint.* Another name for the rock,—used here to describe the greatness of the miracle. ¶ *Into a fountain of waters.* That is, The waters flowed from the rock as from a fountain. The Bible is a book of miracles, and there is nothing more improbable in this miracle than in any other.

In the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and in many manuscripts, there is no division of the psalm here, but the following psalm is united with this, as if they were a single poem. *Why,* in those versions, the division of the Hebrew was not followed, cannot now be ascertained. The division in the Hebrew is a natural division, and was evidently made in the original composition.

PSALM CXV.

It is not possible now to ascertain on what occasion this psalm was composed, or who was its author. It has been generally believed that it was written in the later periods of the Jewish history, and after the captivity in Babylon. There is no improbability in the supposition, though there is nothing so marked in the psalm as to make this supposition necessary. It is evident from vers. 2, 3,

PSALM CXV.

NOT [s] unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name

[s] Isa. xlviii. 11; Ez. xxxvi. 32.

that it was composed in a time of national calamity, and especially of such national disaster as might lead the surrounding nations to say of them that they were forsaken by the God whom they worshipped. This charge is replied to by saying that what had occurred had taken place under the Divine permission, and was no proof that Jehovah was not the true God. This thought leads the author of the psalm to prove the utter powerlessness of idols as compared with Jehovah, and, in view of this, to exhort the people of Israel still to trust in their own God as the Being in whom alone they could hope for protection and safety.

The psalm, therefore, comprises the following parts:—

I. A statement that all which they had was to be traced to God, ver. 1.

II. The existing troubles of the nation as being so great that the heathen were led to infer that Jehovah could not help them, and to ask, with some show of plausibility, where now was the God in whom they trusted? ver. 2.

III. The general statement of the psalmist that what had occurred was to be traced to God; that it was not evidence that he had *forsaken* them, but was proof that he was a *sovereign,* ver. 3.

IV. A statement of the utter weakness, helplessness, and inefficiency of idols; of their entire powerlessness as being without life; and of the stupidity and folly of worshipping such lifeless objects, vers. 4-8.

V. An exhortation to trust in the Lord, on the ground of what he had done, and of the blessings which were to be expected of him, vers. 9-16.

VI. An exhortation to do this at once, since death would soon occur, and praise could not be rendered to him in the grave, vers. 17, 18.

1. *Not unto us, O* LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.* This apparently abrupt commencement of the psalm was undoubtedly in reference to some circumstances which would be well understood at the time when the psalm was composed, but which cannot be definitely ascertained

give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

2 Wherefore [t] should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?

3 But [u] our God *is* in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

4 Their idols [v] *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

[t] Joel ii. 17. [u] Dan. iv. 35. [v] Ps. cxxxv. 15—18; Isa. xl. 19; Jer. x. 3—7.

now. It seems to have been in view of some existing troubles, and the language at the same time expresses a hope of the Divine interposition, and a feeling that the praise of such interposition would belong wholly to God. The phrase "give glory" means, give all the honour and praise. See Notes on Ps. xxix. 1, 2. ¶ *For thy mercy.* The mercy or the favour which we seek and look for,—thy gracious help in the time of trouble. ¶ And *for thy truth's sake.* Thy faithfulness to thy promises; thy faithfulness to thy people. The psalmist anticipated this manifestation of faithfulness with confidence; he felt that all the praise for such an anticipated interposition would belong to God.

2. *Wherefore should the heathen say.* The nations; they who worshipped idols, and who claimed that those idols were true gods. Why should we, thy people, be so left, so forsaken, so afflicted, as to lead these idolaters to suppose that *we* worship a false God, or that the God whom we adore is destitute of power or faithfulness;—either that he does not exist, or that he cannot be relied on. It is evident that they were now in circumstances which would give some plausibility to the question here asked. ¶ *Where* is *now their God?* They seem to be forsaken. God, the God whom they worship, does not come forth for their defence. If he exists at all, he is destitute of power, or he is not true to the people who worship him, and he cannot be trusted. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlii. 3, 10; lxxix. 10.

3. *But our God* is *in the heavens.* The Septuagint adds, "and in the earth." This is not, however, in the Hebrew. The idea is, Our God really exists. He is the true God. He reigns in heaven. His plans are such as are and should be formed in heaven: —lofty, vast, incomprehensible. But he is still *our* God; our Ruler; our Protector. He is not a god of earth—whose origin is earth,—who dwells on earth alone,—like the idols of the heathen; but the whole vast universe is under his control. ¶ *He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* And, therefore, what has been done is right, and we should be submissive to it. He is a sovereign God; and mysterious as are his doings, and much as there *seems* to be occasion to ask the question "Where is now your God?" yet we are to feel that what has occurred has been in accordance with his eternal plans, and is to be submitted to as a part of his arrangements. It is, in fact, always a sufficient answer to the objections which are made to the government of God, *as if* he had forsaken his people in bringing affliction on them, and leaving them, apparently without interposition, to poverty, to persecution, and to tears, that he is "in the heavens;" that he rules there and everywhere; that he has his own eternal purposes; and that all things are ordered in accordance with his will. There *must*, therefore, be some good reason why events occur as they actually do.

4. *Their idols.* Their gods—the gods which *they* worship, as contrasted with the God whom we adore. The design of this description (vers. 4–8) is to show the utter vanity of trusting in such gods, and to lead the people of Israel to put *their* trust in the true God—in Jehovah. ¶ Are *silver and gold.* Made of silver and gold, and they must have, therefore, the properties of silver and gold. They can be of value only *as* silver and gold. They cannot do the work of mind; they cannot do the work of

5 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;
6 They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not;
7 They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.
9 O Israel, trust thou in the

God. The psalmist was not disposed to depreciate the *real* value of these idols, or to throw contempt on them which they did *not* deserve. He was disposed to treat them fairly. They *were* silver and gold; they had an intrinsic value as such; they showed in the value of the material how much the heathen were disposed to honour their objects of worship; and they were not held up to contempt as shapeless blocks of wood or stone. The psalmist *might* have said that most of them *were* made of wood or stone, and were mere shapeless blocks; but it is always best to do justice to an adversary, and not to attempt to underrate what he values. The argument of an infidel on the subject of religion *may* be utterly worthless *as* an argument for infidelity, but it may evince ability, learning, subtilty, clearness of reasoning, and even *candour;*—and it is best to admit this, if it is so, and to give to it all the credit which it deserves *as* a specimen of reasoning, or *as* stating a real difficulty which ought to be solved by somebody,—to call it "silver and gold" if it is so, and not to characterize it as worthless, weak, stupid—the result of ignorance and folly. He has great advantage in an argument who owns the *real* force of what an opponent says; he gains nothing who charges it as the offspring of stupidity, ignorance, and folly—unless he can show that it *is* so. ¶ *The work of men's hands.* Shaped and fashioned by men's hands. They *cannot,* therefore, be superior to those who made them; they cannot answer the purpose of a God.

5–7. *They have mouths,* etc. They are shaped like men, but have none of the attributes of intelligent beings.

8. *They that make them are like unto them.* Stupid; senseless; irrational. See Notes on Isa. xliv. 9–20. ¶ So is *every one that trusteth in them.* Men who do this show that they are destitute of all the proper attributes of reason, since such gods *cannot* help them. It is most strange, as it appears to us, that the worshippers of idols did not themselves see this; but this is in reality no more strange than that sinners do not see the folly of their course of sin; that men do not see the folly of worshipping no God. In fact, there is less of folly among the heathen than there is in this class of men. The worship of an idol shows at least that there is some religious tendency in the mind; some conviction that God ought to be worshipped; some aspiration after a proper object of worship; some appreciation of the true dignity and rank of man as made for worship; but what shall be said of the man who evinces no such tendency,—who has no such aspiration or desire,—who endeavours to extinguish in his nature all that was designed to express the idea of worship, or to lead him to God,—who never starts the inquiry whether there *is* a God,—who never prays for light, for guidance, for pardon, for a preparation for death and eternity,—who never even testifies so much interest in religion as to set up an image of gold, or wood, or stone, as indicative of the fact that he is made above the brutes? There are multitudes of the heathen *less* stupid and foolish than men in Christian lands.

9. *O Israel, trust thou in the* LORD. This exhortation is founded in a great measure on what had been just said in regard to idols. They

LORD: he *is* [w] their help and their shield.[x]

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

12 The LORD hath been mindful [y] of us: he will bless *us:* he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.

13 He [z] will bless them that fear the LORD, *both* small [1] and great.

14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

w Ps. xxxiii. 20.
x Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Prov. xxx. 5.
y Isa. xliv. 21. *z* Ps. xxix. 11.
[1] *with.*

had no power. There was no reason why they should be confided in. They could not help in the day of trouble; and as men need a god, and as the idols cannot be to them as gods, the exhortation is addressed to his people to trust him. He would be to them all that was implied in the name *God;* all that was wanted in a *God.* ¶ *He* is *their help.* The help of those who trust in him. He is able to help them in the time of trouble; he is willing to help them; he *will* help them. They who put their trust in him will find him a sure and certain help. This is the experience of all who confide in him. ¶ *And their shield.* Their protector. See Notes on Ps. v. 12; xviii. 2; xxxiii. 20. Comp. Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Prov. xxx. 5.

10. *O house of Aaron,* etc. Ministers of religion; descendants of Aaron. His family was consecrated to the various services of the sanctuary.

11. *Ye that fear the* LORD, etc. All the people that reverence God; all his true worshippers.

12. *The* LORD *hath been mindful of us.* This would be peculiarly appropriate if the psalm was written, as is commonly supposed, after the return from the captivity of Babylon. In such circumstances it would be every way proper to bring before the mind of the people the fact that God had remembered them and had delivered them. ¶ *He will bless* us. Our past experience furnishes the fullest evidence that he will continue to bless us. He who has delivered us from so great calamities, and who has restored us to our native land after so long and so painful a captivity, will not forsake us now. There can be now no circumstances in which he *cannot* bestow on us all the blessings which we need; there will be none when we may not hope that he will bless us. If he could save us from such troubles, he can save us from all; if he did thus interpose, we may argue that he will always grant us his help when we need it. ¶ *He will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.* Comp. vers. 9, 10.

13. *He will bless them that fear the* LORD. Comp. ver. 11. ¶ Both *small and great.* Marg., as in Heb., *with.* The little *with* the great; children and grown persons; the poor and the rich; the ignorant and the learned; those of humble rank, and those of most exalted birth and condition.

14. *The* LORD *shall increase you more and more.* He will increase your numbers and your power. We may suppose that the people were greatly diminished by the captivity, and that on their return to their country their number was comparatively small. This promise of a great increase was in accordance with the cherished wishes of the Hebrew people, and with the repeated promises which God had made to their fathers. Comp. Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17; xxxii. 12. ¶ *You and your children.* The blessing shall be not only on you, but it shall go down to future generations.

15 Ye [a] *are* blessed of the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

[a] Ps. iii. 8; Eph. i. 3, 4.

17 The dead [b] praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

18 But we [c] will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

[b] Ps. lxxxviii. 10—12; Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19.
[c] Dan. ii. 20.

15. *Ye* are *blessed of the* LORD. Blessed in your present comforts and mercies; blessed in his promises in regard to the time to come; blessed in the prospects which are before you. ¶ *Which made heaven and earth.* The true God; the great Creator of all things. It was not the blessing of a creature—man or angel—it was the blessing of the living God.

16. *The heaven.* Heb., *The heavens.* ¶ Even *the heavens* are *the* LORD'S. A more literal and correct rendering of this would be, "The heavens are heavens for Jehovah." That is, he has reserved the heavens as a home for himself, or as his peculiar possession and abode. Comp. Isa. lxvi. 1; Matt. v. 34; Acts vii. 49. ¶ *But the earth,* etc. He prepared earth for the abode of man; he has placed man upon it to cultivate it; he has given its fruits and productions to man, to be held and enjoyed by man; he has made all on earth subject to man,—the dwellers in the air, the land, and the waters. All this he has given to *man;* not to the angels. Earth is the home of man, the birth-place of man; the place where he lives, where he shows the result of his toil, his skill, and his ingenuity; the place where he builds houses, bridges, monuments, works of art; the place where he prepares for another state of existence; the place where he dies, and is buried. It is, as formed by the Creator, a beautiful abode fitted up for man; how much more beautiful would it be, if man never defiled or desolated it by sin! how happy an abode would it have been if sin had never entered it!

17. *The dead praise not the* LORD. The meaning of this is, that *as* those who are dead cannot praise God, or cannot worship him, this should be done while we are in the land of the living. This opportunity, like all other opportunities, will be cut off in the grave, and hence we should be faithful in this duty, and should avail ourselves of this privilege, while life lasts. In regard to the sentiment here expressed, and the grounds on which that sentiment was entertained, see Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19; Ps. vi. 5. ¶ *Neither any that go down into silence.* Into the grave—the land of silence. Ps. xciv. 17. Nothing is more impressive in regard to the grave than its utter *silence.* Not a voice, not a sound, is heard there,—of birds or men—of song or conversation—of the roaring of the sea, the sighing of the breeze, the fury of the storm, the tumult of battle. Perfect stillness reigns there; and the first sound that shall be heard there will be the archangel's trump.

18. *But we will bless the* LORD, etc. While life lasts; now and ever onward. Our lives are spared; and while those lives shall be continued they shall be spent in praise. We will transmit the praise to future times; and when we are dead, the voice of praise shall be prolonged by those who come after us. It may be added here that we have now higher and clearer views of the grave and of the future world than the psalmist had, and that though it is certain that our voices of praise must be stilled by death, yet in another world we shall continue the work of praise in strains more lofty

PSALM CXVI.

I LOVE [d] the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* [1] as long as I live.

[d] Ps. xviii. 1—6. [1] *in my days.*

than here, and in a continuance of service that shall never end. The grave is, indeed, before us all; but so is also heaven, if we belong to those who truly fear the Lord, and who sincerely worship him through Christ Jesus.

PSALM CXVI.

The author and date of this psalm are unknown. It seems to be rather of a private than a public character, and there are expressions in it which must have been drawn from the personal experience of its writer. It is adapted to public use only because in all public assemblages there are those who would find their own experience represented by the language of the psalm. It *may* have been composed after the return from Babylon, but there is nothing in the psalm to limit it to that time, and the language is such that it *may* have been composed at any period after Jerusalem became the place of public worship, ver. 19.

The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, which combined the two previous psalms into one, divide this into two, at the end of ver. 9. The reason why this was done is unknown.

The psalm appears to have been composed in reference to a dangerous sickness, or some deep affliction which threatened life, vers. 3, 8, 9, 15; and it expresses a purpose to praise and serve God in view of the fact that the author had been delivered from impending death, and that his days had been lengthened out upon the earth.

The psalm embraces the following points:—

I. An expression of love and gratitude in view of the mercies of God, and of a purpose to serve him as long as life should last, vers. 1, 2.

II. A description of his sufferings, as if the pains of hell had seized him, vers. 3, 4.

III. A description of the mercy and goodness of God as interposing in answer to his prayer, and delivering him, vers. 5-11.

IV. A solemn declaration of his purpose to praise God for all his mercies; to take the cup of salvation and call on his name; to pay his vows in the presence of the people of God; to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving; to worship in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of Jerusalem, vers. 12-19.

1. *I love the* LORD. The Hebrew rather means, "I love, because the Lord hath heard," etc. That is, the psalmist was conscious of *love;* he felt it glowing in his soul; his heart was full of that peculiar joy, tenderness, kindness, peace, which love produces; and the source or reason of this, he says, was that the Lord had heard him in his prayers. ¶ *Because he hath heard,* etc. That is, This fact was a *reason* for loving him. The psalmist does not say that this was the *only* reason, or the *main* reason for loving him, but that it was *the* reason for that peculiar joy of love which he then felt in his soul. The main reason for loving God is his own excellency of nature; but still there are other reasons for doing it, and among them are the benefits which he has conferred on us, and which awaken the love of gratitude. Comp. Notes on 1 John iv. 19.

2. *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me.* See Notes on Ps. v. 1. Because he has been gracious to me, and has heard my prayers. This is a *good* reason for serving God, or for devoting ourselves to him, but it is not the *only* reason. We *ought* to worship and serve God whether he hears our prayers or not; whether he sends joy or sorrow; whether we are favoured with prosperity, or are sunk in deep affliction. Men *have* worshipped God even when they have had no evidence that he heard their prayers; and some of the most pure acts of devotion on earth are those which come from the very depths of darkness and sorrow. ¶ *Therefore will I call upon* him *as*

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and [e] the pains of hell [1] gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then [f] called I upon the name of the LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

5 Gracious [g] *is* the LORD, and

[e] Jonah ii. 2, etc. [1] *found me.*

[f] Ps. xxxiv. 6. [g] Ps. ciii. 8.

long as I live. Marg., as in Heb., *in my days.* Encouraged by the past, I will continue to call upon him in the future. I will retain a firm faith in the doctrine that he hears prayer, and I will express my practical belief in the truth of that doctrine by regular and constant habits of worship. When a man once has evidence that God has heard his prayer, it is a reason why he should always call on him in similar circumstances, for God does not change.

3. *The sorrows of death.* What an expression! We know of no intenser sorrows pertaining to this world than those which we associate with the dying struggle—whether our views in regard to the *reality* of such sorrows be correct or not. We may be—we probably are—mistaken in regard to the intensity of suffering as ordinarily experienced in death; but still we dread those sorrows more than we do anything else, and all that we dread *may be* experienced then. Those sorrows, therefore, become the representation of the intensest forms of suffering; and such, the psalmist says, he experienced on the occasion to which he refers. There would seem in his case to have been two things combined, as they often are:—(1) actual suffering from some bodily malady which threatened his life, vers. 3, 6, 8–10; (2) mental sorrow as produced by the remembrance of his sins, and the apprehension of the future, ver. 4. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 5. ¶ *And the pains of hell.* The pains of *Sheol*—Hades; the grave. See Notes on Ps. xvi. 10; Job x. 21, 22; Isa. xiv. 9. The pain or suffering connected with going down to the grave, or the descent to the nether world; the pains of death. There is no evidence that the psalmist here refers to the pains of *hell,* as we understand the word, as a place of punishment, or that he means to say that he experienced the sorrows of the damned. The sufferings which he referred to were those of death—the descent to the tomb. ¶ *Gat hold upon me.* Marg., as in Heb., *found me.* They discovered me—as if they had been searching for me, and had at last found my hiding-place. Those sorrows and pangs, ever in pursuit of us, will soon find us all. We cannot long escape the pursuit. Death tracks us, and is upon our heels. ¶ *I found trouble and sorrow.* Death found *me,* and *I* found trouble and sorrow. I did not seek it, but in what I *was* seeking I found *this.* Whatever we fail to "find" in the pursuits of life, we shall *not* fail to find the troubles and sorrows connected with death. They are in our path wherever we turn, and we cannot avoid them.

4. *Then called I upon the name of the* LORD. Upon the Lord. I had no other refuge. I felt that I must perish unless he should interpose, and I pleaded with him for deliverance and life. Comp. Notes on Ps. xviii. 6. ¶ *O* LORD, *I beseech thee, deliver my soul.* My life. Save me from death. This was not a cry for salvation, but for life. It is an example for us, however, to call on God when we feel that the soul *is* in danger of perishing, for then, as in the case of the psalmist, we have no other refuge but God.

5. *Gracious* is *the* LORD. This fact was his encouragement when he called on God. He believed that God was a gracious Being, and he found him to be so. Comp. Notes on Heb. xi. 6. ¶ *And righteous,* etc. Just; true; faithful. This, too, is a proper foundation of appeal to God:—not that we are righteous, and have a claim to his favour, but that he is a Being who will do what is *right;* that is, what

righteous;[h] yea, our God *is* merciful.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

7 Return unto thy rest,[i] O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.[k]

h Ezra ix. 15; Neh. ix. 8; Dan. ix. 7.

i Jer. vi. 16; Matt. xi. 29; Heb. iv. 3.

k Jude 24.

is best to be done in the case. If he were an unjust Being; if he were one on whose stability of character, and whose regard for right, no reliance could be placed, we could never approach him with confidence or hope. In this sense we may rely on his *justice*—his *justness* of character—as a ground of hope. Comp. Notes on 1 John i. 9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins."

6. *The* LORD *preserveth the simple.* The LXX. render this *babes* — *νήπια.* The Hebrew word has reference to simplicity or folly, as in Prov. i. 22. It then refers to those who are the opposite of cautious or cunning; to those who are open to persuasion; to those who are easily enticed or seduced. The *verb* from which the word is derived—פָּתָה, *pathah*—means *to open, to expand;* then, *to be* open, frank, ingenuous, easily persuaded or enticed. Thus it may express either the idea of being *simple* in the sense of being foolish, easily seduced and led astray; or, *simple* in the sense of being open, frank, ingenuous, trustful, sincere. The latter is evidently its meaning here. It refers to one of the characteristics of true piety,—that of unsuspecting trust in God. It would describe one who yields readily to truth and duty; one who has singleness of aim in the desire to honour God; one who is without guile, trick, or cunning. Such a man was Nathanael (John i. 47): "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." The Hebrew word used here is rendered *simple,* Ps. xix. 7; cxix. 130; Prov. i. 4, 22, 32; vii. 7; viii. 5; ix. 4; xiv. 15, 18; xix. 25; xxi. 11; xxii. 3; xxvii. 12; Ezek. xlv. 20; and *foolish,* Prov. ix. 6. It does not elsewhere occur. The meaning here is, that the Lord preserves or keeps those who have simple and unwavering trust in him; those who are sincere in their professions; those who rely on his word. ¶ *I was brought low.* By affliction and trial. The Hebrew literally means to hang down, to be pendulous, to swing, to wave—as a bucket in a well, or as the slender branches of the palm, the willow, etc. Then it means to be slack, feeble, weak, as in sickness, etc. See Notes on Ps. lxxix. 8. Here it probably refers to the prostration of strength by disease. ¶ *And he helped me.* He gave me strength; he restored me.

7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* Luther, "Be thou again joyful, O my soul." The meaning seems to be, "Return to thy former tranquillity and calmness; thy former freedom from fear and anxiety." He had passed through a season of great danger. His soul had been agitated and terrified. That danger was now over, and he calls upon his soul to *resume* its former tranquillity, calmness, peace, and freedom from alarm. The word does not refer to *God* considered as the "rest" of the soul, but to what the mind of the psalmist *had* been, and *might* now be again. ¶ *For the* LORD *hath dealt bountifully with thee.* See Notes on Ps. xiii. 6.

8. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death.* My life. Thou hast saved me from death. This is such language as would be used by one who had been dangerously ill, and who had been restored again to health. ¶ *Mine eyes from tears.* Tears which he had shed in his sickness, and in the apprehension of dying. It *may* refer to tears shed on other occasions, but it is most natural to refer it to this.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

10 I [l] believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.

11 I said in my haste, All men *are* liars.

[l] 2 Cor. iv. 13.

Comp. Notes on Ps. vi. 6. ¶ And *my feet from falling.* From stumbling. That is, he had not, as it were, fallen by the way, and been rendered unable to pursue the journey of life. All this seems to refer to one occasion—to a time of dangerous illness.

9. *I will walk before the* LORD, etc. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxvii. 13; Isa. xxxviii. 20. This expresses a full belief that he would live, and a purpose to live "before the Lord;" that is, as in his presence, in his service, and enjoying communion with him.

10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* This, in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, begins a new psalm, but without any good reason. This language is borrowed by the Apostle Paul to express his confidence in the truth of the gospel, and the effect which that confidence had on him in causing him to declare the truth. 2 Cor. iv. 13. The meaning here is, that in the time of his affliction the psalmist had true faith in God; and, as a result of that, he was able now to speak as he did. At that time he trusted in God; he called on him; he sought his mercy, and God heard his prayer; and now, as the consequence of that, he was enabled to give utterance to these thoughts. Faith was at the foundation of his recovery, and he was now reaping the fruits of faith. ¶ *I was greatly afflicted.* In danger of death. The psalmist reviewed this now, and he saw that all that he had felt and dreaded was real. He *was* in imminent danger. There *was* occasion for the tears which he shed. There *was* reason for the earnestness of his cry to God.

11. *I said in my haste.* The Hebrew word here used means to flee in haste; to be in alarm and trepidation; and the idea seems to be, that the assertion referred to was made under the influence of excitement,—or that it was not the result of sober reflection, but of an agitated state of mind. It does not necessarily imply that that which was said was false, for many true statements may be made when the mind is agitated and excited; but the meaning is, that he was then in such a state of mind as *to suggest* the belief, and to cause the assertion that all men are liars. Whether calm reflection would, or would not, confirm this impression of the moment would be a fair question after the excitement was over. ¶ *All men* are *liars.* Are false; no one is to be relied on. This was said in the time of his affliction, and this *added* much *to* his affliction. The meaning is that, in those circumstances of distress, no one came to his aid; no one sympathized with him; there was no one to whom he could unbosom himself; no one seemed to feel any interest in him. There were relatives on whom he might have supposed that he could rely; there may have been those to whom he had shown kindness in similar circumstances; there may have been old friends whose sympathy he might have had reason to expect; but all failed. No one came to help him. No one shed a tear over his sorrows. No one showed himself true to friendship, to sympathy, to gratitude. All men seemed to be false; and he was shut up to God alone. A similar thing is referred to in Ps. xli. 5–9; lxxxviii. 18; comp. also Job xix. 13–17. This is not an unnatural feeling in affliction. The mind is then sensitive. We need friends then. We expect our friends to show their friendship then. If they do not do this, it seems to us that the entire world is false. It is evident from the whole course of remark here that the psalmist on reflection felt that he had said this *without* due thought, under the influence of excitement,—and that he was dis-

12 What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14 I [m] will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

m Jonah ii. 9.

posed, when his mind was restored to calmness, to think better of mankind than he did in the day of affliction and trouble. This also is not uncommon. The world *is* much better than we think it is when our own minds are morbid and our nerves are unstrung; and bad as the world is, our opinion of it is not unfrequently the result rather of our own wrong feeling than of just reflection on the real character of mankind.

12. *What shall I render unto the* LORD for *all his benefits toward me?* All his "recompences,"—the same word which in ver. 7 is rendered "hath dealt bountifully." The question here has reference to that. What return can be equal to his bounties; what will be a proper acknowledgment of them; with what can I repay him for them all? The question is a natural and a proper question. It is one which we naturally ask when we have received a favour from our fellow-mortals; how much more proper is it in view of the favours which we receive from God,—especially in view of the mercy of God in the gift of a Saviour; the love manifested in the redemption of the soul! What CAN be an adequate return for love like that,—for mercies so great, so undeserved?

13. *I will take the cup of salvation.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 6. The "cup of salvation" means the cup by which his sense of the greatness of the salvation might be expressed—the cup of thanksgiving. Comp. Notes on 1 Cor. x. 16. The reference seems to be to a custom in festivals of drinking a cup of wine as a special expression of thanks or of obligation. The act would be more solemn, and the truth more deeply impressed on the mind, when accompanied by some religious rite—some ceremonial, as in the Lord's Supper, expressly designed to call the mercy of God to remembrance. ¶ *And call upon the name of the* LORD. Engage in a solemn act of devotion; make it a matter of special ceremony or observance to call the mercy of God to remembrance. This was *one* way of rendering to the Lord a return for the benefits received at his hands;—as it is now. Christians do this at the table of the Lord—in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

14. *I will pay my vows,* etc. I will perform or execute. The word *vows* here refers probably to the solemn promise which he had made in his sickness—the promise to devote himself to God, should he be restored to health. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 15, 20. Such promises are commonly made in sickness, and, alas! almost as commonly disregarded and forgotten on a restoration to health. Yet such vows *should* be sacredly observed, for (*a*) They are right and proper; (*b*) they are made in most solemn circumstances; (*c*) they are usually sincere; (*d*) they are of the nature of a covenant with God; (*e*) they are made when we are in the best position to take just views of life—of this life, and of the life to come; (*f*) the subsequent life would be happier and better if they were faithfully carried out. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxii. 25; lxvi. 13, 14. ¶ *In the presence of all his people.* Publicly. The vows were made in private; on the sick bed; when alone; in the silence of the night-watches; when no eye was upon him who made them but the eye of God. There is a propriety, however, that the expression of thanksgiving should be public. Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 20. Indeed, nothing is more proper than public thanks for a restoration from sickness; and as in our public assemblies prayer is often specially

15 Precious [n] in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and*

[n] Ps. lxxii. 14.

offered for the sick at their own request, so it would be equally proper that, at their request, public thanks should be rendered for their recovery.

15. *Precious in the sight of the* LORD is *the death of his saints.* Of his people; his friends. Luther renders this, "The death of his saints is held to be of value"—(*ist werth gehalten*)—"before the Lord." The word rendered *precious*—יָקָר, *yakar* —means *costly*, as precious stones, 1 Kings x. 2, 10, 11; *dear, beloved*, as relatives and friends, Ps. xlv. 9; *honoured, respected*, Ecc. x. 1; *splendid, beautiful*, Job xxxi. 26; *rare*, 1 Sam. iii. 1. The idea here is, that the death of saints is an object of *value;* that God regards it as of importance; that it is connected with his great plans, and that there are great purposes to be accomplished by it. The idea *here* seems to be that the death of a good man is in itself of so much importance, and so connected with the glory of God and the accomplishment of his purposes, that he will not cause it to take place except in circumstances, at times, and in a manner, which will best secure those ends. The *particular* thought in the mind of the psalmist seems to have been that as *he* had been preserved when he was apparently so near to death, it must have been because God saw that the death of one of his friends was a matter of so much importance that it should occur *only* when the most good could be effected by it, and when the ends of life had been accomplished; that God would not decide on this hastily, or without the best reasons; and that, therefore, he had interposed to lengthen out *his* life still longer. Still, there *is* a general truth implied here, to wit, that the act of removing a good man from the world is, so to speak, an act of deep deliberation on the part of God; that good, and sometimes great, ends are to be accomplished by it; and that, therefore, God regards it with special interest. It *is* of value or importance in such respects as the following:—(1) As it is the removal of another of the redeemed to glory—the addition of one more to the happy hosts above; (2) as it is a new triumph of the work of redemption,—showing the power and the value of that work; (3) as it often furnishes a more direct proof of the reality of religion than any abstract argument could do. How much has the cause of religion been promoted by the patient deaths of Ignatius, and Polycarp, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the hosts of the martyrs! What does not the world owe, and the cause of religion owe, to such scenes as occurred on the death-beds of Baxter, and Thomas Scott, and Halyburton, and Payson! What an argument for the truth of religion,—what an illustration of its sustaining power,—what a source of comfort to us who are soon to die,—to reflect that religion does not leave the believer when he most needs its support and consolations; that it can sustain us in the severest trial of our condition here; that it can illuminate what seems to us of all places *most* dark, cheerless, dismal, repulsive—"the valley of the shadow of death!"

16. *O* LORD, *truly I* am *thy servant.* In view of thy mercy in delivering me from death, I feel the obligation to give myself to thee. I see in the fact that thou *hast* thus delivered me, evidence that I *am* thy servant—that I am so regarded by thee; and I recognize the obligation to live as becomes one who has had this proof of favour and mercy. ¶ *The son of thine handmaid.* Of a pious mother. I see now the result of my training. I call to my recollection the piety of a mother. I remember how *she* served thee; how

the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice [o] of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

18 I [p] will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,

19 In the courts [q] of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

o Lev. vii. 12. p Ec. v. 5.

PSALM CXVII.

O PRAISE [r] the LORD, all ye

q Ps. xcvi. 8; c. 4. r Rom. xv. 11.

she trained me up for thee; I see now the evidence that her prayers were heard, and that her efforts were blessed in endeavouring to train me up for thee. The psalmist saw now that, under God, he owed all this to the pious efforts of a mother, and that God had been pleased to bless those efforts in making *him* his child, and in so guiding him that it was not improper for him to speak of himself as possessing and carrying out the principles of a sainted mother. It is not uncommon—and in such cases it is proper—that all the evidence which we may have that we are pious,—that we are living as we ought to live,—that we are receiving special favours from God,—recalls to our minds the instructions of early years, the counsels and prayers of a holy father or mother. ¶ *Thou hast loosed my bonds.* The bonds of disease; the fetters which seemed to have made me a prisoner to Death. I am now free again. I walk at large. I am no longer the captive—the prisoner—of disease and pain.

17. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.* I will publicly thank and praise thee. See Notes on Ps. cvii. 22. ¶ *And will call upon the name of the* LORD. Will worship and praise the Lord.

18. *I will pay my vows,* etc. See ver. 14.

19. *In the courts of the* LORD'S *house.* See Notes on Ps. lxv. 4. Comp. Ps. lxxxiv. 2; xcii. 13; xcvi. 8; c. 4; cxxxv. 2. ¶ *In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.* Where the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, was reared. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelujah. A call on others to join in the praise of God. The psalmist felt his own heart drawn to the service of praise by all the mercies of God; he desired, as an expression of his own feelings, that others should unite with him in that sacred exercise. When our own hearts are filled with gratitude, we wish that all others may partake of the same feeling.

PSALM CXVII.

The occasion and the author of this psalm are alike unknown. De Wette regards it as a *Temple-psalm*, and agrees with Rosenmüller in the supposition that it was sung either at the beginning or the end of the service in the temple. Knapp supposes that it was used as an intermediate service, sung during the progress of the general service to vary the devotion, and to awaken a new interest in the service, either sung by a choir or by the whole people.

In many manuscripts of Kennicott and De Rossi, and in several editions of the Scriptures, this psalm is united with the following. The psalm has no independent character or meaning of its own, and seems to have been designed, like the "Doxologies" in our Books of Psalms and Hymns, to be attached to other psalms as occasion might require. There is no psalm designed for public worship to which it might not thus properly be attached.

1. *O praise the* LORD, *all ye nations.* The idea is that God has a claim to universal worship, and that all the nations of the earth are under obligations to adore him as the true God. He is not the God of the Hebrew people only, but of all people; his praise should be celebrated not merely by one nation, but by all. This is one of the passages in the Old Testament, anticipating what is more fully disclosed in the New Testament,

nations: praise him, all ye people,

2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth [s] of the LORD *endureth* for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

s Isa. xxv. 1; John xiv. 6; 1 John v. 6.

in which the sacred writer extends his vision beyond the narrow boundaries of Judea, and looks to the world, the whole world, as the theatre on which the true religion was to be displayed, and for which it was designed. It is language such as *would* be indited by the Spirit of inspiration on the supposition that the time would come when the barrier between Jews and Gentiles would be broken down, and when all the nations of the earth would be in the possession of the true religion, and would unite in the worship of the same God. This doctrine, however, was not fully made known until the coming of the Redeemer. The announcement of this was made by the Redeemer himself (comp. Matt. viii. 11; xii. 21; xxviii. 19); it was the occasion of no small part of the trouble which the Apostle Paul had with his countrymen (comp. Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6; xxi. 21; xxii. 21; xxvi. 20, 23); it was one of the doctrines which Paul especially endeavoured to establish, as a great truth of Christianity, that all the barriers between the nations were to be broken down, and the Gospel proclaimed to all men alike, Rom. iii. 29; ix. 24, 30; xi. 11; xv. 9–11, 16, 18; Gal. ii. 2; Eph. ii. 11–18; iii. 1–9. It is under the gospel that this language becomes peculiarly appropriate. ¶ *Praise him, all ye people.* People of all lands. The word here rendered *praise*—שַׁבֵּחַ, *shabahh*—means properly to soothe, to still, to restrain,—as, for example, billows (Ps. lxxxix. 9); and then, to praise, *as if* to soothe with praises, — *mulcere laudibus*, Pacuv. The idea of *soothing* or *mitigating*, however, is not necessarily in the word, but it may be understood in the general sense of *praise.* We may in fact often soothe or appease men—angry, jealous, suspicious men—by skilful flattery or praise—for there are few, even when under the influence of anger or hatred, who may not thus be approached, or who do not value praise and commendation more than they do the indulgence of passion; but we cannot hope thus to appease the anger of God. We approach him to utter our deep sense of his goodness, and our veneration for his character; we do not expect to turn him from anger to love—to make him forget his justice or our sins—by soothing flattery.

2. *For his merciful kindness is great toward us.* His kindness; his compassion; his love. All nations—all people—may say this, and therefore the psalm is adapted to universal praise. Especially may this be said in view of the love of God to mankind in the gift of a Saviour—a Saviour not for any one people peculiarly or exclusively, but for the world, John iii. 16. ¶ *And the truth of the* LORD endureth *for ever.* All that God has said:—his declarations; his promises; his assurances of mercy. They are the same in all lands where they are made known, and they are the same in all ages of the world. *Truth* is a representation of things as they are; and truth, therefore, must be ever the same. What was true in the first ages of the world in regard to the relation of the sum of the squares on the two sides of a right-angled triangle to the square of the hypothenuse is true now, and will always be true; and so, what God has affirmed at any one time will always remain the same in all ages and in all lands. What was truth to Abraham is truth to us; what was truth to Paul is truth to us; what was truth to the martyrs is truth to us; what is truth to us will be truth to all generations of the world in all lands, and will be truth for ever. *This* fact, too, is a just foundation

for universal praise, and therefore the psalm is so adapted to be used in all lands and among all people. How often in our own language has this psalm been the medium of the utterances of praise in Christian sanctuaries:—

"From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,
Through every land, by every tongue.
Eternal are thy mercies, Lord;
Eternal truth attends thy word;
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more."

PSALM CXVIII.

Of the authorship of this psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed, nothing can now be ascertained with certainty. The common opinion has been that it is a psalm of David, and that it was composed when his troubles with Saul ceased, and when he was recognized as king. Some, however, have referred it to Hezekiah on the occasion of his restoration from sickness; others to the time of the return from the Babylonish exile; and others to the time of the Maccabees. It would be useless to examine these opinions, as they are all of them mere conjecture, and as no certainty can now be arrived at.

What is apparent on the face of the psalm is, that it was a psalm of thanksgiving, to be employed in the temple when an *offering* or *sacrifice* was led up to the altar (ver. 27) to be presented as an acknowledgment of mercy from God, on some occasion of deliverance from danger, by some one whose claim to rule had been rejected, but who was now victorious over his enemies, and recognized as the rightful leader and ruler of the people. The psalm is in a measure *dramatic*. The author is the speaker in the first twenty-one verses; in the remainder of the psalm the priests and the people speak, and at the close, the psalmist again utters praise.

The psalm consists of the following parts:—

I. The author of the psalm speaks, vers. 1-21.

(1) He calls on all to praise the Lord, and to unite with him in the expression of thanks, because what had occurred was a matter of interest to all the people;—to Israel, to the house of Aaron, to the priesthood, to all that feared God, vers. 1-4.

(2) A description of his peril and deliverance, vers. 5-18. He had been in distress; he had called on the Lord; he had seen the benefit of trusting in the Lord rather than in man. All nations had compassed him about as bees; they had thrust sore at him; they had sought his life; but he had not been dismayed; he had felt, even in the midst of his dangers, that he would live to declare the works of the Lord, vers. 17, 18.

(3) The speaker approaches the temple. He asks that the doors may be opened that he may enter and praise the Lord. He addresses those who have charge of the temple — the ministers of religion—and desires leave to come and present his offering, vers. 19-21.

II. The priests and people speak, vers. 22-27.

(1) They recognize him now *as* the Ruler—the corner-stone—the foundation of the nation's prosperity, and its hope. He had been rejected by those who were professedly laying the foundation of empire, but he had now established his claims to being regarded as the very corner-stone on which the whole edifice must rest, ver. 22.

(2) They recognize this as a marvellous work of God, and as fitted to excite the deepest admiration, ver. 23.

(3) They recognize this as a joyful day, *as if* God had *created a day* for the very purpose of celebrating an event so joyous, ver. 24.

(4) They pronounce him blessed who thus came in the name of the Lord; they bless him out of the house of the Lord, vers. 25, 26.

(5) They direct him to bring his offering, and to bind it to the horns of the altar preparatory to sacrifice. He is permitted freely to come. His offering is recognized as proper, so that he can approach with an assurance of acceptance, ver. 27.

III. The author of the psalm again speaks, vers. 28, 29. He acknowledges

PSALM CXVIII.

O GIVE [t] thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good; because his mercy [u] *endureth* for ever.

2 Let [v] Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

t 1 Chron. xvi. 8, 34. *u* Ps. ciii. 17. *v* Ps. cxv. 9, etc.

God as his God, and calls on all to praise him.

Portions of the psalm are, in the New Testament, applied to Christ; and it has been made a question whether it had, or had not, an original reference to him. Thus in Matt. xxi. 42; Mark xii. 11; Luke xx. 17, it is quoted by the Saviour as illustrating a truth in regard to himself. In Acts iv. 11, the twenty-second verse of the psalm is applied by Peter to the Saviour, as having been fulfilled in him,—or, as meaning that the *language* of the psalm would properly describe the fact which had occurred in the treatment of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of the Jewish rabbins regarded the psalm as referring to the Messiah, and not a few Christian interpreters have supposed that it had such an original reference.

It seems clear, however, from the psalm itself that it could not have been composed primarily with reference to him. There are portions of it which cannot, without a very forced use of language, be applied to him, as for example, the allusion to the attack made by "all nations" on the person referred to in the psalm (ver. 10), and in the allusion to the danger of death (vers. 17, 18). The person referred to in the psalm was in danger of death, but he was not given over to death. He had the assurance in the very midst of the danger that he would *not* die, but would continue to live (ver. 17). The Redeemer, however, did die. His enemies accomplished their purpose in this respect. They put him to death, though he rose again from the dead.

It is clear, therefore, I think, that the psalm had not an original reference to the Messiah. Still, there is much in it which is applicable to him, and which might be used as expressive of what occurred to him. It contains *principles* also which may be as applicable to him as they were to the psalmist; and, therefore, it is used by the Saviour to enforce the moral of his own parable in reference to himself, as having had a counterpart in their own history, *in a case* which must have been familiar to them all. As such, it is right to use it now, as *illustrating* what occurred in the treatment of the Redeemer.

1: *O give thanks unto the* LORD, etc. Let others unite with me in giving thanks to the Lord; let them see, from what has occurred in my case, what occasion there is for praise. Every instance of a particular favour shown to any one is to others an occasion for praise, inasmuch as it is an illustration of the general character of God. On this verse comp. Notes on Ps. cvi. 1. The language is nearly the same.

2. *Let Israel now say*, etc. The Hebrew people; the people of God. They have now, in my case, a new illustration of the mercy of God which ought to animate them, and to encourage their hearts. Comp. Ps. cxv. 9.

3. *Let the house of Aaron now say*, etc. Comp. Ps. cxv. 10. The ministers of religion. They are appointed to serve God; to lead in his worship; to defend his truth; to keep up faith in the truth of religion. They are, therefore, interested in my case, and may derive from it a new proof of the merciful character of God which they may employ, not only for their own encouragement in personal piety, but in the duties of their office. My case furnishes a new argument, of which they can make use in defending the truth, and in illustrating the power of religion.

4. *Let them now that fear the* LORD *say*, etc. Comp. Ps. cxv. 11. All that worship God are interested in what God has done for me. It is a manifestation of the Divine character which should cheer them. They are called, therefore, to unite with

5 I [w] called upon the LORD [1] in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.

6 The [x] LORD *is* [2] on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

w Ps. cxx. 1. [1] *out of distress.*
x Ps. xxvii. 1; Heb. xiii. 6.

7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.

8 *It* [y] *is* better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man:

[2] *for me.* *y* Jer. xvii. 5, 7.

the author of the psalm in praise and thanksgiving, not merely from sympathy with him, but because great truths of religion had been illustrated, in his case, which were of as much importance to them as to him.

5. *I called upon the* LORD *in distress.* Marg., as in Heb., *out of distress.* In the very midst of trouble he called upon the Lord; his voice was heard, as it were, coming from the depth of his sorrows. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 6. ¶ *The* LORD *answered me.* That is, he heard my prayers, and delivered me. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 6. ¶ And set me *in a large place.* I was before pressed on every side; sorrows compassed me around; I could not move; I had no liberty. Now he gave me space and freedom on every side, so that I could move without obstruction or pain. This is literally, "The LORD"—(not *Jehovah* here, but *Jah*)—"answered me in a large place." See Notes on Ps. iv. 1; xviii. 19.

6. *The* LORD *is on my side.* Marg., as in Heb., *for me.* The Lord is with me. He is my helper. He defends my cause. ¶ *I will not fear.* I have nothing to be afraid of. God is more mighty than any or all of my foes, and he can deliver me from them all. Comp. Ps. lvi. 4, 9, 11. ¶ *What can man do unto me?* Any man; all men. They can do no more than God permits. They cannot destroy me when he means to save me; they cannot defeat his gracious designs towards me. I am safe if God is my Friend. Comp. Notes on Rom. viii. 31.

7. *The* LORD *taketh my part with them that help me.* The psalmist had friends. There were those who stood by him. He relied, indeed, on their aid, but not on their aid without God. He felt that even *their* help was valuable to him only as God was with them. There was direct dependence on God in reference to himself; and there was the same sense of dependence in respect to all who were engaged in his defence. This might be rendered, however, simply "for my help," and is so rendered by De Wette. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "The Lord is my helper." ¶ *Therefore shall I see* my desire *upon them that hate me.* Literally, "I shall see upon those that hate me;" that is, I shall look upon them according to my wish; I shall see them overthrown and subdued. See Notes on Ps. liv. 7. Comp. Ps. xcii. 11; cxii. 8.

8. It is *better to trust in the* LORD *than to put confidence in man.* This is stated apparently as the result of his own experience. He had found men weak and faithless; he had not so found God. Comp. Ps. xl. 4; lxii. 8, 9. Literally, "Good is it to trust in Jehovah more than to confide in man." This is the Hebrew form of comparison, and is equivalent to what is stated in our version, "It is *better,*" etc. It is better, (1) because man is weak,—but God is Almighty; (2) because man is selfish,—but God is benevolent; (3) because man is often faithless and deceitful,—God never; (4) because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be,—but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us: and (5) because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to this present

9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in [z] princes.

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I [1] destroy them.

11 They compassed me about;

[z] Ps. cxlvi. 3.
[1] *cut them off.*
[a] Deut. i. 44.

yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

12 They compassed me about like bees; [a] they are quenched as the fire of thorns: [b] for in the name of the LORD I will [2] destroy them.

[b] 2 Sam. xxiii. 6; Nahum i. 10.
[2] *cut down.*

life,—the power of God will be commensurate with eternity.

9. It is *better . . . than to put confidence in princes.* Even in the most mighty of the human race; in those who of all men may be supposed to have the most ability to aid us; in those whose favour is often sought more than the favour of God. Princes are but men; often as faithless and deceitful as other men; often less reliable in their character than those in more humble life: and in the great matters where we most need aid—in sickness, in danger, in death, in the eternal world—as absolutely powerless as men in the lowest condition of poverty, or in the most humble rank.

10. *All nations compassed me about.* They surrounded me; they hemmed me in on every side, so that I seemed to have no chance to escape. It would seem from this that the psalm was composed by some one who was at the head of the government, and whose government had been attacked by surrounding nations. This would accord well with many things that occurred in the life of David; but there were also other times in the Jewish history to which it would be applicable, and there is nothing that necessarily confines it to the time of David. ¶ *But in the name of the* LORD *will I destroy them.* Marg., as in Heb., *cut them off.* This is the language which he used at that time; the purpose which he then formed; an expression of the confidence which he then cherished. He meant to subdue them; he had no doubt that he would be able to do it.

11. *They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about,* etc. The sentiment and the language of the previous verse are here repeated, as if to give force to what he had said, or to deepen the impression. His own mind dwelt upon it, and the events to which he referred came so vividly to his recollection, and were so important, that he dwells upon them. The subject was worth more than a passing remark. The mind was full, and the language comes from an overflowing heart.

12. *They compassed me about like bees.* (*a*) As thick or numerous as bees; (*b*) armed as bees,—or, their weapons might be compared to the stings of bees. ¶ *They are quenched as the fire of thorns.* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "They *burn* as the fire of thorns." The connexion would seem to demand this, but the Hebrew will not bear it. The figure is changed in the Hebrew, as is not uncommon. The mind of the psalmist at first recalls the *number* and the *malignity* of his foes; it then instantly adverts to the rapid manner in which they were destroyed. The illustration from the "fire of thorns" is derived from the fact that they quickly kindle into a blaze, and then the flame soon dies away. In Eastern countries it was common to burn over their fields in the dry time of the year, and thus to clear them of thorns and briars and weeds. Of course, at such a time they would kindle quickly, and burn rapidly, and would soon be consumed. So the psalmist says it was with his enemies. He came upon them, numerous as they were, as the fire runs over a field in a dry time, burning everything before it. Comp. Notes on Isa.

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but [c] the LORD helped me.

14 The LORD [d] *is* my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

17 I [e] shall not die, but live, and declare the [f] works of the LORD.

c Mic. vii. 8. *d* Ex. xv. 2, 6; Isa. xii. 2. *e* Hab. i. 12. *f* Ps. lxxiii. 28.

xxxiii. 12. ¶ *For in the name of the* LORD *I will destroy them.* That is, such was his purpose *then;* such was the reason why they so soon and suddenly disappeared.

13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.* Literally, "Thrusting thou hast thrust at me." This is the Hebrew mode of expressing intensity, repetition, or emphasis. The meaning is, that they had made a deadly thrust at him; that they had repeated the blows; that they had come with a fierce determination to crush and destroy him. The psalmist, as it were, sees the enemy again before him, and addresses him as if he were present. Everything is vivid to the mind; the whole scene appears again to pass before him.

14. *The* LORD *is my strength and song.* He is the source of strength to me; and he is the subject of my praise. There is no ground of praise in myself for anything that I have done, but all is due to him. ¶ *And is become my salvation.* He has saved me. I live because *he* preserved me. So we shall be saved in heaven solely because *he* saves us, and there, more than can be possible here, we shall say, "God is our strength and our song, and is become our salvation."

15, 16. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation.* Rejoicing *for* salvation; — song, praise, thanksgiving. Luther renders this beautifully; "They sing with joy for victory in the houses of the righteous." ¶ Is *in the tabernacles of the righteous.* The *tents* of the righteous; their dwellings. That is, (*a*) it is a *fact* that the voice of joy and rejoicing is there; (*b*) it is *appropriate* that it should be so, or that a righteous family *should* be happy,—the dwelling-place of praise; (*c*) God will *add* to the happiness of the righteous, or will make their habitation happy, peaceful, blessed. There is nothing that diffuses so much happiness through a family as religion; there is no joy like that when a member of a family is converted; there is no place on earth more happy than that where a family bows before God with the feeling that all are children of God and heirs of salvation. ¶ *The right hand of the* LORD *doeth valiantly.* Heb. *Doeth strength.* That is, God does great things, laying the foundation for joy and praise.

17. *I shall not die, but live.* Evidently the psalmist had apprehended that he would die; or, he had felt that he was in imminent danger of dying. In this language he seems, as in ver. 13, to go back again to the scenes referred to in the psalm. He lives them over again. He describes the feelings which he had then. He saw that he was in danger. His enemies were thick round about him, and sought his life. But he had *then* the assurance that they would not be victorious; that they would not accomplish their object; that he would be protected; that he would live to declare what God had done for him. He does not say *how* he had this assurance, but there is no impropriety in supposing that he had it, as Hezekiah had in similar circumstances (see Isa. xxxviii. 5–8, 21), by a direct Divine intimation. Things *like* this are not uncommon now, when, in danger or in sickness, the

18 The LORD hath chastened [g] me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

19 Open [h] to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD;

[g] 2 Cor. vi. 9.
[h] Isa. xxvi. 2; Rev. xxii. 14.

20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

21 I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

22 The [i] stone *which* the build-

[i] Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 4, 7.

mind is strongly impressed with the belief that there will be a restoration to health and safety, and when the mind is made calm and peaceful *by* that belief—the very calmness of the mind under such a belief contributing not a little to that result. Why should we hesitate to believe that such a faith and hope *may* come from the Lord? Comp. Acts xxvii. 22–25. ¶ *And declare the works of the* LORD. Declare what he has done.

18. *The* LORD *hath chastened me sore.* Heb., "The Lord has chastened —has chastened me." See Notes on ver. 13. The psalmist had been greatly afflicted, and he now looked upon his affliction in the light of a fatherly chastisement or correction. It had been a severe trial, and he was not insensible to its severity, though he regarded it as designed for his own good. ¶ *But he hath not given me over unto death.* He interposed when I was in danger; he rescued me when I was on the verge of the grave. This is the close of the psalmist's statement in regard to the Divine dealings with him. He had passed through great danger; he had been sorely afflicted; but he had been rescued and spared, and he came now to express his thanks to God for his recovery. In the following verse he addresses those who had the care of the sanctuary, and asks that he might be permitted to enter and offer his thanks to God.

19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness,* etc. The gates of the house devoted to a righteous God; the gates of a house where the principles of righteousness are strengthened, and where the just emotions of the heart may be expressed in the language of praise. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxvi. 2. The language here may be regarded as addressed to those who had charge of the house of the Lord—the priests — requesting that they would open the doors and permit him to enter to praise God for his mercy. Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 20.

20. *This gate of the* LORD. This gate dedicated to the service of the Lord; that belongs to the house of the Lord. ¶ *Into which the righteous shall enter.* Through which the righteous pass. That is, It is *for* such persons, and all who come with a purpose to serve and worship God should be permitted to pass through them; I claim the privilege, therefore, of so passing through these gates into the house of God, for I come to praise him. All who are truly righteous, all who desire to worship God, all who wish and purpose to be holy, have a *right* thus to enter the house of God—to be recognized as his friends—to be permitted to join in all the devotions of his people; all such will have a right to enter the temple above. None have a right to exclude them here; none in heaven will be disposed to exclude them there.

21. *I will praise thee.* Within thy courts. ¶ *For thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.* See ver. 14.

22. *The stone* which *the builders refused.* See Notes on Matt. xxi. 42, 43. Comp. Mark xii. 10, 11; Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7. This is an allusion to a building, as if a stone should be cast away by workmen as unfit to be worked into the edifice. The figure would then be applicable to any one who, for any purpose, was

ers refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

23 This is 1 the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes.

24 This *is* the day *which* the

1 *from the LORD.*

rejected. Thus it might have been applied many a time to David; so, doubtless, to others who urged claims to authority and power; and so, eminently, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to suppose that this had original reference to the Messiah, but the *language* was applicable to him; and it is used in the passages above referred to, in addresses to the Jews, merely to show them how the *principle* was found in their own writings, that one who was rejected, like a stone regarded as unfit to be worked into any part of a building, *might* be in reality so important that it would be laid yet at the very corner, and become the most valuable stone in the edifice,—that on which the whole superstructure would rest. ¶ *Is become the head* stone *of the corner.* The principal stone placed at the corner of the edifice. This is usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully wrought of any in the edifice. Of course one would be needed at each corner of the building to constitute a firm support, but usually there is one placed at one corner of an edifice larger and more carefully wrought than the others, often laid with imposing ceremonies, and prepared to contain whatever it may be thought necessary to deposit in the foundation of the building to be transmitted to future times as preserving the names of the builders, or expressing the design of the edifice. Such a position he who had been rejected was to occupy in the civil polity of his country; such a position eminently the Lord Jesus occupies in relation to the church. Eph. ii. 20.

23. *This is the* LORD'S *doing.* Marg., as in Heb., *This is from the Lord.* That is, It is to be traced to the Lord alone. It is not the result of human wisdom or power. The deliverance from danger,—the raising up from the low condition,—the change by which he who was rejected was restored to his rightful place,—all this was to be traced to God alone. So it was in the case of the psalmist; so it was in the case of the Redeemer. None but God could have made him who was rejected, despised, crucified, and laid in the grave, the Saviour of a world. The place which the once-rejected Redeemer now bears in the church,—the honours bestowed on him as the head of the church,—the triumph of his gospel in the world,—all prove that it is the work of God. ¶ *It* is *marvellous in our eyes.* It is fitted to excite wonder. It is not one of those things which are to be ranked with the common and well-known events that are easily explained, and that excite no wonder; it is one of those things which cannot be explained by any known law; which belong to the "supernatural;" which bear the marks of a direct Divine interposition; which are fitted to excite the admiration of mankind. Thus it was in the case of the psalmist; thus, pre-eminently, it was in the case of the Redeemer. No operation of natural laws will constitute a sufficient explanation of the latter. It is a matter for wonder, for rejoicing, and for praise, that one, despised, rejected, crucified, has been raised from the grave; that his religion has spread so far over the world; that it influences mankind as it does; and that he himself is exalted to a rank "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Eph. i. 21.

24. *This* is *the day* which *the* LORD *hath made.* As if it were a new day, made for this very occasion; a day which the writer of the psalm did not expect to see, and which *seemed* therefore to have been *created* out of the

LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save now. I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

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ordinary course, and *added* to the other days. He was in danger of death; his days were likely to be cut off and ended, so that he should see no more. But God had spared him, and added *this* joyous day to his life; and it was meet that for this he should be praised. It was so full of joy, so unexpected, so bright, so cheerful, that it appeared to be a new day coming fresh from the hand of the Almighty, unlike the other days of the year. So the Sabbath—the day that commemorates the resurrection of the Redeemer—is God's day. He claims it. He seems to have *made* it anew for man. Amidst the other days of the week,—in a world where the ordinary days are filled up with so much of earth, so much toil, trouble, care, vexation, vanity, wickedness,—it *seems* like one of the days that God made when he first made the world; before sin and sorrow entered; when all was calm, serene, happy. The Sabbath is so calm, so bright, so cheerful, so benign in its influence; it is so full of pleasant and holy associations and reminiscences, that it *seems* to be a day fresh from the hand of God, unlike the other days of the week, and *made especially*, as if by a new act of creation, for the good of mankind. So when a man is raised up from sickness—from the borders of the grave—it seems to be a *new* life given to him. Each day, week, month, year that he may live, is so much *added* to his life, as if it were created anew for this very purpose. He should, therefore, regard it not as his own, but *as* so much given to him by the special mercy and providence of God,—as if *added on* to his life. Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 5. ¶ *We will rejoice and be glad in it.* The psalmist, and all who united with him in his thanksgivings. So the Christian Sabbath. It is a day of joy—all joy, and no sorrow. It is a day to be happy in;—a day of rest; a day, when the cares and toils of life are suspended; a day, when we are no longer harassed with those things which vex us in the worldliness of the week; a day, when we think of God, of redemption, of hope, of heaven. The Sabbath *should* be a day of joy, and not of gloom; it *would* be the happiest of all days to weary and jaded men everywhere, if they observed it aright. In a world of toil and sorrow, it is among the richest of God's blessings to men; it strengthens, refreshes, and cheers the heart of burdened and sorrowful man here; it lifts the soul to joyous contemplation of that eternal Sabbath where wearisome toil and sorrow shall be no more.

25. *Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD, etc. The word *save* here seems to be used in the general sense of imploring the Divine interposition and mercy. It is a part of the word which in the New Testament is rendered "Hosanna"—*save now* (Matt. xxi. 9),—and is the language which the multitudes employed when they followed the Saviour as he went from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. The language which they used on that occasion was borrowed from this psalm, and was eminently appropriate to the occasion—"Hosanna,—blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord;"—but the fact that it was thus employed does not prove that the psalm had original reference to the Messiah. The language was not improbably used on high festivals, and would be *naturally* employed when the Messiah came. ¶ *Send now prosperity.* Give success; be favourable. God *had* interposed, and now the prayer is, that there might be continued and uninterrupted prosperity; that as the tide had begun to turn in the psalmist's favour, it might recede no more; that the calamities and woes

26 Blessed [k] *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

[k] Matt. xxi. 9; xxiii. 39.

27 God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light; [l] bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.

[l] Esther viii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

which he had experienced might not be repeated. This was omitted in the acclamations of the multitude that attended the Saviour (Matt. xxi. 9); but it is eminently an appropriate prayer to be used in connexion with his coming,—since his coming, whether to the world, to an individual, to a church, or to a community, brings the highest kind of "prosperity" in its train.

26. *Blessed* be *he that cometh in the name of the* LORD. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 9. This is the language of those who had charge of the sanctuary, addressing him who came in the name of the Lord to present his thank-offering. It is the language of welcome; the assurance that his offering would be acceptable to God. It was *applicable* to the Messiah, as coming in the name of the Lord, and was so used by the multitudes (Matt. xxi. 9), and by the Saviour himself (Matt. xxiii. 39); but this use of the language does not prove that it had original reference to him. The Old Testament abounds in language which may thus be employed to express ideas under the Christian dispensation; but this does not prove that all such language was originally designed to refer to that dispensation. ¶ *We have blessed you out of the house of the* LORD. We, the priests, the ministers of religion, have pronounced and do pronounce you blessed. We welcome your approach. You may come freely with your thank-offering. It will be accepted of the Lord. You come under our benediction, and the benediction of God.

27. *God* is *the* LORD. Still the language of the priests in their official capacity. The meaning here seems to be "God is Jehovah;" or, Jehovah is the true God. It is an utterance of the priesthood in regard to the great truth which they were appointed specifically to maintain,—that Jehovah is the true God, and that he only is to be worshipped. This truth it was appropriate to enunciate on all occasions; and it was peculiarly appropriate to be enunciated when a prince, who had been rescued from danger and death, came, as the restored leader of the people of God, to acknowledge his gracious intervention. On such an occasion,—in view of the rank and character of him who came,—and in view of what God had done for him,—it was proper for the ministers of religion to announce in the most solemn manner, that Jehovah was the only true and living God. ¶ *Which hath showed us light.* Who has given us light in the days of our darkness and adversity; who has restored us to prosperity, and bestowed on us the blessings of safety and of peace. ¶ *Bind the sacrifice with cords.* Come freely with the sacrificial victim; with the offering which is to be presented to God in sacrifice. The word —חג, *hhag*—commonly means a festival or feast, Ex. x. 9; xii. 14; and then it means a festival-sacrifice, a victim, Ex. xxiii. 18; Mal. ii. 3. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "Prepare a solemn feast." Our translation probably expresses the true sense. The word rendered *cords*, means properly anything interwoven or interlaced. Then it means a cord, a braid, a wreath; and then a branch with thick foliage. Different interpretations have been given of the passage here, but probably the word is correctly rendered *cords*. ¶ *Unto the horns of the altar.* Altars were often made with projections or "horns" on the four corners. Ex. xxvii. 2; xxx. 2; xxxvii. 25; 1 Kings ii. 28. Whether the animal was actually bound to the altar when it was

28 Thou [m] *art* my God, and I will praise thee; *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee.

[m] Isa. xxv. 1.

29 O [n] give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

[n] ver. 1.

slain, is not certain; but there would seem to be an allusion to such a custom here. Lead up the victim; make it ready; bind it even to the altar, preparatory to the sacrifice. The language is that of welcome addressed to him who led up the victim,—meaning that his sacrifice would be acceptable.

28. *Thou* art *my God, and I will praise thee.* This is the language of the author of the psalm,—his solemn profession before the sanctuary and the altar; his response to the priesthood. In ver. 27, they had declared that "Jehovah alone was God;" to this he now replies, that he acknowledges it; he recognizes him as the true God, and as his God; he comes to praise him; and he professes his purpose always to exalt him as his God. ¶ Thou art *my God, I will exalt thee.* Repeating the solemn declaration that Jehovah alone was the God whom he worshipped, and that it was his purpose always to magnify his name.

29. *O give thanks unto the* LORD, etc. The psalm closes, as it began, with an exhortation to praise God. In the beginning of the psalm, it was a general exhortation; here it is an exhortation founded on the course of thought in the psalm, or as a proper conclusion from what had been referred to in the psalm. Evidence had been given that the Lord was good; on the ground of that, all men are exhorted to give him thanks.

PSALM CXIX.

This is an Alphabetical Psalm,—the longest, and most perfect in its kind, in the collection of Psalms. The peculiarity of the composition consists in this,—that the first *eight* verses of the psalm begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet—א, *Aleph;* the next eight verses with the second letter—ב, *Beth;* and so on, through the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. These parts are designated in our common version by the names of the Hebrew letters respectively indicating the parts,—Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, etc.

The general subject of the psalm is THE LAW OF GOD considered as a rule of life; as sanctifying the soul; as a support in trial; as imparting happiness to the mind,—in its contemplation, and in obedience to it. The psalm appears to have been intended to set forth the excellency of that law, and the happy effects of obeying it, in every variety of form, and with every variety of expression. In its great length, extending to one hundred and seventy-six verses, there was ample opportunity to illustrate this; and the purpose of the author of the psalm seems to have been to see how much could be said on this, and to say all that could be said on it. It is remarkable that a single subject *could* be pursued so far with so much variety, and with so little that can be regarded as repetition; for there are perhaps no two verses in the psalm so exactly similar that there cannot be seen, either in themselves, or in their connexion, some new phase given to the subject, or some new shade of thought not expressed elsewhere. So marked is this design of the psalm, so constant is the reference to the law of God—the testimonies of God—the statutes of God—that, according to the Masora, there is "only one verse in the psalm which does not contain some title or description of the word of God."

The psalm seems to be a record of the personal experience of the author, or the result of his meditations on the subject. It is not the Jewish people speaking, or the church, as many have supposed, but it is evidently an individual—not improbably a man of years—giving the result of his experience in regard to the influence of the law or the word of God in the various circumstances of life:—in regard to what he had *found* that to be to himself personally. At the

same time, the language is such as will express the experience of others, and is such as might be employed in public worship.

It is not probable, however, that a psalm so long was commonly used in public worship, as many of the shorter psalms were. It is a great storehouse of truths, most precious and valuable, on one of the most important subjects of religion—the word of God; and it *may* have been intended, as would seem not improbable from the alphabetical arrangement, to be committed to memory by the young, that their minds might be early stored with valuable precepts to be their guide in the journey of life. A young man could not have a better treasure laid up in his mind than he would possess by committing this psalm to memory.

Whether the psalm was the work of David or of some later writer cannot be ascertained. Many have ascribed it to David; and it has been supposed that he wrote it either when he was an exile among the Philistines (1 Sam. xxvii.), or when he was young, and had not yet obtained the authority of the government. This last opinion is derived—Rosenmüller thinks correctly—from vers. 9, 23, 46, 141, 161. Gurlitt supposed that its author was some youth who was made captive by the Assyrians, and who composed the psalm in his captivity, as expressive of his attachment to his religion:—a youth who could not, though away from his country and home, and surrounded by temptations, be turned away from the religion of his fathers by threats or bribes;—who rejected all the allurements and blandishments which could be presented to him to induce him to abandon that religion, and to conform to the customs of idolatry,—or who resisted all temptations to sensual gratifications. This idea is derived from vers. 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 36, 39, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51, 53, 56, 67, 72, 74, 78, 83, 84, 95, 109. Thus understood, it would be applicable to the condition of such a young Hebrew as Joseph or Daniel, and would express the feelings which *such* young men would have in the temptations by which they were surrounded, and the firmness of their attachment to the principles of the religion in which they had been trained. The idea is a beautiful one, and may properly be used for an *illustration*, but there is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed under those circumstances. Others have supposed that the psalm was written by Jaddo (Neh. xii. 22), the high-priest in the time of Alexander the Great—amidst the troubles which then existed in Judea, and amidst the opposition of the Samaritans,—and that the design was to show his own firmness in the Jewish religion, and to excite the Hebrews to the same firmness by setting forth the authority and excellence of the word of God, and the authority of the law. Rüdinger supposes that it was composed in the time of the persecutions under Antiochus,—the times of the Maccabees,—with the same design. All these are mere conjectures, and it is now impossible to ascertain the occasion on which the psalm was composed, or to determine who was its author. Nor is it necessary. The psalm is so applicable to the people of God at all times, so fitted to strengthen the mind in trial, so adapted to guide, comfort, and support the soul, and so true in regard to the influence and value of the law of God, that it is not needful to know when it was composed, or who its author was. It is sufficient to know that it was composed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is a repository of truths which will be of inestimable value in all ages of the world.

There is no *grouping* or *arrangement* of the subjects in the psalm, and little or no connexion between the sentiments in the verses of it. Much in it has a proverbial cast, or is presented in the form of aphorisms; and the order of thought *seems* to have been suggested by the necessity of choosing a particular letter with which to commence each verse, and the succession of eight verses under each letter. It might be possible to make an arrangement of the psalm under particular heads,—such as the following, under the general title of THE WORD OF GOD, or THE LAW OF GOD;—

I. In youth.	V. At night.
II. In trial.	VI. In public.
III. In duty.	VII. In private.
IV. In meditation.	VIII. In prosperity.

IX. In adversity, etc., etc.;—

but, in an *exposition* of the psalm, such an arrangement or classification, changing the structure of the psalm, might be of doubtful propriety, and it will be right to adhere to the order which the Spirit of Inspiration has seen fit to observe.

PSALM CXIX.

ALEPH.

BLESSED *are* the [1] undefiled in the way, who [o] walk in the law of the LORD.

[1] Or, *perfect*, or, *sincere*. [o] Ps. cxxviii. 1.

2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.[p]

3 They [q] also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

[p] Prov. xxiii. 26; 1 John iii. 20.
[q] 1 John iii. 9; v. 18.

1. *Blessed* are *the undefiled in the way*. In the way or journey of life; in the path of religion; in the road which leads to heaven. As life—the religious life—is represented under the image of a *journey*, the expression here is equivalent to saying, "Blessed are those who in the journey of life—in their religious course—are pure, sincere, uncontaminated." On the word *way*, see Notes on Ps. i. 6. The margin here on the word *undefiled*, is *perfect*, or *sincere*. So the Hebrew. The word is the same as in Job i. 1, where it is rendered *perfect*. See Notes on that passage. The Greek translation is *undefiled*—ἄμωμοι. So the Latin, *immaculati*. Luther renders it, "Who live without blemish" or stain. The idea is, "Blessed are they who are upright, sincere, perfect, in their course." The whole psalm is designed to illustrate this thought, by showing what the influence of a sincere and conscientious attachment to the principles of the law or word of God in the various circumstances of life must be. ¶ *Who walk in the law of the* LORD. Who habitually obey his law. This *constitutes* sincerity, uprightness, perfection in a man's life; for the law of the Lord is the only just rule of human conduct.

2. *Blessed* are *they that keep his testimonies*. His commandments or laws, considered as what *he bears witness to* concerning that which is just, wise, good. Every law of a parent is to his children a *testimony* on his part of what is wise and right and good; and so every law of God is *his* solemn testimony as to what is right and good for man. See Notes on Ps. xix. 7; xxv. 10. ¶ And that *seek him with the whole heart*. With a sincere desire to know his will and to do it; without hypocrisy or guile; with no selfish or sinister aims. As God *knows* the heart, all other modes of "seeking" him must be in vain. It is impossible for man to impose on him by appearances.

3. *They also do no iniquity*. See Notes on 1 John iii. 9. The meaning is, that they are righteous; their character is that they *do* that which is right. It cannot mean that all persons who are religious are actually and absolutely perfect,—for no man would hold this opinion; no one does hold it. It is general language such as is commonly used to describe an upright or righteous man. The declaration is true of all who are the friends of God,—or, who are truly religious,—in the following senses: (1) That they are habitually and characteristically righteous; (2) That they intend to do right,—for a man who deliberately purposes to do wrong—to lead a life of sin and disobedience, *cannot* be a pious man. (3) That when they do err, it is not the result of intention, or the design of their life, but because they are tempted; are overcome with passion; are led by the power of their native corruption of heart to act *contrary* to their better judgment and their true character. See Rom. vii. 14–17. On the other hand, it is true that a man who is not characteristically *righteous*; who is not an upright man in his dealings; who is not true, and honest, and temperate, and just, and benevolent, *cannot* be a child of God and heir of heaven. No exactness of orthodoxy, and no fervour of emotion, and no zeal in the cause of religion, can constitute true piety without this. ¶ *They walk in his*

4 Thou [r] hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.
5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
6 Then shall I not be ashamed,[s] when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7 I [t] will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned [1] thy righteous judgments.

[r] Deut. vi. 17; xi. 13, 22.
[s] 1 John ii. 28. [t] ver. 171.
[1] *judgments of thy righteousness.*

ways. Habitually; constantly; characteristically. They are not *merely* honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men, but they walk in the ways of God; they are *religious.*

4. *Thou hast commanded.* All this is here traced to the *command* of God; to the fact that he has required it. It is not mere human prudence; it is not mere morality; it is not because it will be for our interest; it is because God requires it. This is the foundation of all true virtue; and until a man acts from this motive it cannot be said that he is in the proper sense a righteous man. ¶ *To keep thy precepts diligently.* Heb., *very much;* that is, to do it constantly; faithfully. Each one of his laws is to be observed, and to be observed always, and in all circumstances.

5. *O that my ways were directed,* etc. Indicating the desire of the pious heart. That desire—a prevailing, constant, uniform desire—is to keep the law of God. It is the aim of the life; it is the supreme purpose of the soul; it is the ruling wish of the man, thus to keep the law of God. He in whose bosom this is *not* the constant wish cannot be a pious man. The Hebrew particle used here, and rendered "O that," is a particle denoting a wish, or an earnest desire. The word "ways" denotes the course of life. The whole is expressive of an earnest *desire* to live in accordance with the law of God. It implies also a sense of dependence on God.

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed.* On the word *ashamed,* see Notes on Job vi. 20; Ps. xxv. 2, 3. The meaning here is, that he would not have occasion to be ashamed; he would not be disappointed; all his hopes would be realized. He would have full evidence of piety; he would enjoy the comforts which he sought in religion; he would feel assured of ultimately obtaining eternal life. ¶ *When I have respect unto all thy commandments.* Literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in his having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man *intends* to keep ALL the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man *can* be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep ALL the commandments of God; to submit to his will *in everything.*

7. *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart.* With an upright and sincere heart. ¶ *When I shall have learned.* Heb., "In my learning." In the practice or act of learning them. His own experience of their nature, influence, and value would lead him to sincere praise. He had no doubt of finding that they were worthy of his praises, and of seeing in them more and more occasion to glorify and honour God. The more we know of God, the more shall we see in him to praise. The larger our acquaintance and experience, the more our hearts will be disposed to

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young [u] man cleanse his way? By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

[u] Prov. i. 4.

magnify his name. This remark must extend to all that there is in God *to be learned;* and as that is infinite, so there will be occasion for renewed and more elevated praise to all eternity. ¶ *Thy righteous judgments.* Marg., as in Heb., *Judgments of thy righteousness.* The laws or statutes which God, as a righteous or just God, appoints to be the rule of conduct to his creatures.

8. *I will keep thy statutes.* Thy commands; thy laws. This expresses the firm purpose of the psalmist. He *meant* to keep the law of God; he could confidently say that he *would* do it,—yet coupled with the prayer which follows, that God would not forsake him. ¶ *O forsake me not utterly.* Heb., "To very much;" so as to leave me to myself. His confidence that he would keep the commandments of God was based on the prayer that God would not leave him. There is no other ground of persuasion that we shall be able to keep the commandments of God than that which rests on the belief and the hope that He *will not* leave us.

9. *Wherewithal.* This begins the second portion of the psalm, extending to ver. 16, in which all the verses begin with the *second* letter of the Hebrew alphabet, indicated in our translation by the word *Beth.* These names of the letters, inserted for convenience, are no part of the psalm, as it is not so marked in the original. This mode of indicating the divisions of the psalm is peculiar to our version. It is not in the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, or the German versions. The word *wherewithal* means "*by what*" (Heb.); that is, What means shall a young man adopt by which he may "cleanse his way?" It indicates a state of inquiry. The case supposed is that of a young man pondering the question how he may be saved from the corruptions of his own heart, and escape the temptations to which he is exposed in early years, and lead a pure and upright life. There can be no more important inquiry for one just entering on the journey of life; there can be found nowhere a more just and comprehensive answer than is contained in this single verse. All the precepts of ancient and modern wisdom, all the teachings of heathen morality and religion, and all the results of the experience of mankind, could furnish nothing in addition to what is here suggested. The world has no higher wisdom than this by which to guide a young man, so that he may lead a holy life. ¶ *Shall a young man.* The remark here *might* be applied also to those who are in middle life, or even to those who are in more advanced years, but it is applied here especially to the young, because it may be supposed that in the other cases the matter may be regarded as settled by experience; because to the young, as they commence life, the inquiry is so momentous; and because it is a question which it may be supposed *will* come up before the mind of every young man who has any right aspirations, and any proper conception of the dangers which encompass his path. ¶ *Cleanse his way?* Make his course of life pure and upright. The *language* does not necessarily imply that there had been any previous impurity or vice, but it has particular reference to the future:—not how he might cleanse himself from past offences, but how he might make the future pure. The inquiry is, how he might conduct himself,—what principles he could adopt,—under what influence he could bring himself,—so that his future course would be honest, honourable, upright. ¶ *By taking heed* thereto, etc. The word

10 With [v] my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
11 Thy [w] word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: teach [x] me thy statutes.

[v] 2 Chron. xv. 15.
[w] Ps. i. 2. [x] ver. 26, etc. Ps. xxv. 4.

"thereto" is not in the original. The Hebrew is, "To keep according to thy word;" or, "in keeping according to thy word." Prof. Alexander supposes that this means "to keep it [his way] according to thy word;" and that the whole is a question,—"How may a young man so cleanse his way as to keep it according to thy word?"—and that the answer to the question is to be found in the general strain of the psalm, or in the general principles laid down in the psalm. But it is clear that the answer to the question must be found *in* the verse, or not found at all; and the most natural construction is that in our translation. So De Wette renders it: "How can a young man walk guiltless? If [or, when] he holds [or, keeps] himself according to thy word." The meaning clearly is, If he governs himself according to the law of God,—if he makes that law the rule of his life and conduct, he would be enabled to do it. All other things might fail; this rule would never fail, in making and keeping a man pure. The more principles of common honesty, the principles of honour, the considerations of self-interest, the desire of reputation,—valuable as they may be,—would not constitute a security in regard to his conduct; the law of God would, for that is wholly pure.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee.* See Notes on ver. 2. The psalmist in ver. 2 speaks of the "blessedness of those who seek the Lord with the whole heart;" in this verse he says that this blessedness was his. He could affirm that he had thus sought God. He had such a consciousness that this was the aim and purpose of his life that he could say so without hesitation. Every man who claims to be a religious man *ought* to be able to say this. Alas, how few can do it! ¶ *O let me not wander,* etc. Keep me in this steady purpose; this fixed design. This is the language of a heart where there is a consciousness of its weakness, and its liability to err, strong as may be its purpose to do right. Such an apprehension is one of the best means of security, for such an apprehension will lead a man to *pray,* and while a man prays he is safe.

11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart.* Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 31. The word rendered *hid* means properly to conceal, so that a thing may be secret, private, inaccessible; then, to lay up in private, to treasure up, to hoard—as money or jewels—commonly *hidden* from public view. Job xx. 26; Ps. xvii. 14. Then it means to lay up in one's heart, as a secret, inaccessible place; to hide one's thoughts, purposes, designs; or to lay up knowledge or wisdom in the heart as a treasure, Job x. 13; Prov. ii. 1; vii. 1. The meaning here is, that he had *treasured* up the word of God, as the most valuable thing, in his heart; it was *there,* though unseen; it constituted the secret power by which he was governed; it was permanently deposited there, as the most valuable of his treasures. ¶ *That I might not sin against thee.* That it might protect me from sinning against thee. That I might be continually guided by its precepts; that I might be admonished of duty; that I might be deterred from going astray.

12. *Blessed* art *thou,* O LORD. Blessed art thou as the author of such a law. This language of benediction or doxology is an outbreak of feeling or adoration in view of such a law,—so good, so holy, so fitted to

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as *much as* in all riches.

15 I will meditate [y] in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

GIMEL.

17 Deal [z] bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.

y Ps. i. 2.

z Ps. cxvi. 7.

direct and guide man. The mind is full of the subject; and the lips give vent to the feeling of gratitude and joy that such a law had been revealed to men. ¶ *Teach me thy statutes.* Make me more and more acquainted with a law so pure, so rich, so valuable.

13. *With my lips have I declared.* That is, I have openly and publicly made thy words known to others; I have defended and vindicated them. ¶ *All the judgments.* The word *judgments* here means the same as statutes or laws: and the idea is, that he had been on the side of those laws, and had endeavoured by argument and persuasion to bring others under their influence. *How* he had done it we are not informed; but we have no reason to suppose that the author of the psalm was a minister of religion, and if not, then we have here an example of what a man who does not claim to be a public teacher may do, and should do, in making known and defending Divine truth. Every man is as much bound to do this in his sphere as the minister of religion is in his; and private members of the church have often an opportunity of doing this to more advantage than the ministers of the gospel possess. ¶ *Of thy mouth.* With my mouth I speak those things which have proceeded from thine. I speak in thy name; I declare thy truth. It is not my own; it is thine.

14. *I have rejoiced,* etc. I do rejoice; I exult in this; I find my happiness there. The word expresses a high degree of joy. ¶ *As* much as *in all riches.* Heb., "as upon all wealth." As men rejoice who have great wealth. I find *my* happiness in religion, as if in the possession of real wealth. Prov. x. 22.

15. *I will meditate in thy precepts.* I will think of them; I will find my happiness in them. See Notes on Ps. i. 2. ¶ *And have respect unto thy ways.* And look to thy ways—thy commands. I continually regard them, or refer to them in my mind as the guide of my life. See Notes on ver. 6.

16. *I will delight myself in thy statutes.* I will find my happiness in thy laws. See Notes on Ps. i. 2; cxii. 1. ¶ *I will not forget thy word.* I will not allow the world to crowd it out of my mind.

17. *Deal bountifully,* etc. This commences the next portion of the psalm, indicated by the letter *Gimel,* the *third* letter of the Hebrew alphabet, answering to our letter *g.* Each verse of this portion (vers. 17–24) begins with this letter. There is a resemblance between the first *word* of this verse—גְּמֹל, *gemol*—and the letter—*Gimel*—which commences the eight verses of this portion of the psalm. The noun (derived from the verb)—גָּמָל, *gamal*—means a camel, and the letter *gimel* has been supposed to have derived its name from its having originally a resemblance to the camel's neck. In some of the Phenician inscriptions, and in the Ethiopic alphabet, it has this form (Gesenius, *Lex*). The *verb* used here means to do, or show, or cause good or evil to any one; and then to reward, or to recompense, either good or evil. Here it seems to be used in

18 [1] Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

[1] *Reveal.*

19 I *am* a stranger [a] in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.

[a] Ps. xxxix. 12; Heb. xi. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

a general sense of doing good, or showing favour, as in Ps. xiii. 6; cxvi. 7; cxlii. 7. Comp. Prov. xi. 17. It does not necessarily imply that the author of the psalm had any claim, or demanded this on the ground of merit. He begged the favour, the friendship, the interposition of God in his behalf. ¶ *That I may live.* The continuance of life was dependent on the favour of God. ¶ *And keep thy word.* For grace to do this he was equally dependent on God; and he asked that life might be continued, in order that he might honour the word of God by obeying it.

18. *Open thou mine eyes.* Marg., *Reveal.* So the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. The Hebrew word means to be naked; then to make naked, to uncover, to disclose, to reveal. Here it is the same as *uncover;* that is, take away from the eyes what is before them to prevent clear vision. Comp. Num. xxii. 31; xxiv. 4, 16. ¶ *That I may behold wondrous things.* Things which are fitted to excite wonder and amazement:—that is, things which are secret or hidden from the common view; the deep, spiritual meaning of the word of God. By natural vision he might see the surface—the letter; to see the deep, hidden, real, meaning, he needed the special influence of God. Comp. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 14, 15. He believed that there *were* such things in the law of God; he desired to see them. ¶ *Out of thy law.* Out of the written word; out of the Scriptures. The word *law* here is used to denote *all* that God had revealed to mankind; all that is contained in the volume of inspiration. The truths taught here are (1) That there are deep, hidden, secret things in the word of God, which are not perceived by the natural man; (2) That those things, when understood, are fitted to excite wonder, or to fill the mind with admiring views of God; (3) That a special illumination of God is necessary that man may perceive these things; and (4) That the proper understanding of these things is connected with prayer, and can be hoped for only in answer to prayer. No one has a proper appreciation of Divine truth—of the beauty, the spiritual meaning, the grandeur, the sublimity of the Bible—until he is a renewed—a praying—man. Comp. Notes on 1 Cor. ii. 6–15.

19. *I* am *a stranger in the earth.* A wayfaring man; a pilgrim; a sojourner; a man whose permanent home is not in this world. The word is applicable to one who belongs to another country, and who is now merely passing through a foreign land, or sojourning there for a time. Comp. Notes on Heb. xi. 13. The home of the child of God is heaven. Here he is in a strange—a foreign—land. He is to abide here but for a little time, and then to pass on to his eternal habitation. ¶ *Hide not thy commandments from me.* Make me to know them; keep them continually before me. In this strange land, away from my home, let me have the comfort of feeling that thy commands are ever with me to guide me; thy promises to comfort me. The feeling is that of one in a strange land who would desire, if possible, to keep up constant communications with his *home*—his family, his friends, his kindred there. On earth, the place of our sojourning—of our pilgrimage—the friend of God desires to have constant intercourse with heaven, his final home; not to be left to the desolate feeling that he is cut off from all intercourse with that world where he is for ever to dwell.

20 My [b] soul breaketh for the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud [c] *that are* cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

b Ps. lxiii. 1. *c* 1 Pet. v. 5.

20. *My soul breaketh.* This word means to break; to crush; to break in pieces by scraping, rubbing, or grating. The *idea* would seem to be, not that he was crushed as by a single blow, but that his soul—his strength—was worn away by little and little. The desire to know more of the commands of God acted continually on him, exhausting his strength, and overcoming him. He *so* longed for God that, in our language, "it wore upon him"—as any ungratified desire does. It was not the *possession* of the knowledge of God that exhausted him; it was the intenseness of his *desire* that he might know more of God. ¶ *For the longing.* For the earnest desire. ¶ That it hath *unto thy judgments at all times.* Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with *all* that there is in the law of God. Comp. Notes on Ps. xvii. 15.

21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud.* Comp. Ps. ix. 5. The meaning is, that God had done this not by word but by deed. The proud were everywhere rebuked by God, alike in his law, and in his providence. The *connexion* seems to be this:—the psalmist is meditating on the benefit or advantage of keeping the law of God; of a humble, pious life. His mind naturally adverts to what would be the opposite of this,—or to this in contrast with an opposite course of life; and he says, therefore, that God had in every way, and at all times, manifested his displeasure against that class of men. *Such* a course, therefore, must be attended with misery; but the course which *he* proposed to pursue must be attended with happiness. ¶ That are *cursed.* The accursed; those who are regarded and treated by God *as* accursed, or as objects of his disapprobation. ¶ *Which do err from thy commandments.* Who depart from thy law. The sense is, "*I* propose and intend to keep thy law. As a motive to this, I look at the consequences which must follow from disobeying it. I see it everywhere in the Divine treatment of those who *do* disregard that law. They are subject to the displeasure—the solemn rebuke—of God. So all must be who disregard his law; and it is my purpose not to be found among their number."

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt.* Show me thy favour, and let me not suffer in the estimation of mankind on account of my religion. Let me not be exposed to malicious charges; to accusations of hypocrisy, insincerity, and unfaithfulness on account of my religion. This "reproach and contempt" might arise from two sources; (1) On account of religion itself, or *because* he was a true friend of God; or (2) he may have been charged with hypocrisy and insincerity; with doing things inconsistent with the profession of religion. These accusations he prays may be removed from him (*a*) In order that the true religion might not be in itself a matter of reproach, but that God might honour his own religion, and make it esteemed among men; (*b*) Because he was conscious that so far as he was concerned, the charges were

23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: *but* thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.
24 Thy testimonies also *are*
d vers. 77, 92. [1] *men of counsel.*

my [d] delight, *and* [1] my [e] counsellors.

DALETH.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the
e Prov. vii. 1–4.

unfounded. He did not deserve the "reproach and contempt" that properly belong to a life of hypocrisy and insincerity. ¶ *For I have kept thy testimonies.* My conscience assures me of this. I can appeal to thee, my God, in proof that I do not deserve the charge of insincerity and hypocrisy. Every professedly pious man *ought* to be able thus to appeal to conscience and to God, and to say, in the most solemn manner, that he does not *deserve* the reproach of hypocrisy and insincerity.

23. *Princes also did sit* and *speak against me.* This would have been applicable to David many times in his life, but it was also applicable to many others, and there is nothing in the language which would limit it to David. It is evident that the author of the psalm had been subject to reproach from those who were of exalted rank; it is clear also that he felt this keenly. It is natural, whether proper or not, that we should feel the reproach and contempt of those in elevated life—the rich, the honoured, the learned—more than of those in humbler life. Their good opinion can be of value only as they may be better qualified than others to judge of what constitutes true excellence, or as they may have it in their power to do us more harm, or to do more to aid us in doing good, than others have; but truth and principle are never to be sacrificed that we may secure their favour; and if, in the faithful discharge of our duty, and the zealous adherence to the principles of our religion, we incur their frowns, we are to bear it, —as the great Lord and Saviour of his people did. Heb. xiii. 13. ¶ But *thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.* I was engaged in this; I continued to do it; I was not deterred from it by their opposition; I found comfort in it, when they sat and talked against me. This would *seem* to have reference to some occasion when they were together—in public business, or in the social circle. They, the princes and nobles engaged in the ordinary topics of conversation, or in conversation connected with revelry, frivolity, or sin. Unwilling to participate in this,—having different tastes,—feeling that it was improper to be one of their companions in such a mode of spending time, or in such subjects of conversation, *he* withdrew, he turned his thoughts on the law of God, he sought comfort in meditation on that law and on God. He became, therefore, the subject of remark—perhaps of their jests—*because* he thus refused to mingle with them, or because he put on what seemed to be hypocritical seriousness, and was (what they deemed) stern, sour, unsocial, as if he thus publicly, though tacitly, meant to rebuke them. Nothing will be more *likely* to subject one to taunting remarks, to rebuke, to contempt, than to manifest a religious spirit, and to introduce religion in any way in the circles of the worldly and the gay.

24. *Thy testimonies also* are *my delight.* See Notes on ver. 16. He found his main happiness in the word of God. ¶ And *my counsellors.* Marg., as in Heb., *men of my counsel.* He sought direction and advice from them as from a friend who would give him counsel. He looked to the revealed law of God to ascertain what was right; to know how he should act in the emergencies of life.

25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust.* This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the *fourth* letter of the Hebrew

dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul [1] melteth for heavi-

[1] *droppeth.*

alphabet,—*Daleth,* equivalent to the English *d.* There is nothing in the sense to separate it from the other parts of the psalm. The word rendered *cleaveth* means to be glued to; to stick fast. It has the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot easily be separated from it. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxiii. 8. The word *dust* here may mean either the earth, and earthly things, considered as low, base, unworthy, worldly; or it may mean the grave, as if he were near to that, and in danger of dying. De Wette understands it in the latter sense. Comp. Ps. xliv. 25; xxii. 29. Yet the word *cleave* would hardly suggest this idea; and the force of that word would be better represented by the idea that his soul, as it were, *adhered* to the things of earth; that it seemed to be so fastened to them—so *glued* to them—that it could not be detached from them; that his affections were low, earthly, grovelling, so as to give him deep distress, and to lead him to cry to God for life and strength that he might break away from them. This expresses what is often felt by good men, and thus presents one of the forms of religious experience. Comp. Rom. vii. 14, 15. ¶ *Quicken thou me.* Cause me to live; give me vigour and strength to break away from this which binds me fast, and to rise above these low propensities. ¶ *According to thy word.* That is, either according to thy *promises* made to thy people to aid them when they are in distress; or, according to the principles of thy word, that I may live as thy word requires. Who has not found his soul so cleaving to dust—to earth—to worldly things—as to feel himself degraded by it, and to lead him to cry out with earnestness that God would give him strength, life, vigour, that his soul might rise to better things?

26. *I have declared my ways.* That is, I have declared or recounted them to thee. I have made mention of my cares, troubles, anxieties, purposes. I have laid them all before thee, reserving or keeping back nothing. ¶ *And thou heardest me.* Thou didst answer me. It is only when we declare all our ways before God, that we can hope he *will* hear us. It is right and proper that we should go before God with *all* our cares and troubles. There is nothing that gives us anxiety, of which we may not speak to him, however trivial it may seem to be,—even as a child speaks to a mother of the smallest matter that troubles him. *When* this is done, we may be assured that God will not turn away from us, or disregard our cry.

> "I told him all my secret grief;
> My secret groaning reached his ears;
> He gave my inward pains relief,
> And calmed the tumult of my fears."

¶ *Teach me thy statutes.* Make known to me thy will. Acquaint me with what thou wouldst have me to do. See ver. 12.

27. *Make me to understand,* etc. See Notes on ver. 18. ¶ *So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.* The things in thy works—thy providential dealings—that are wondrous. That is, with a heart full of the subject, he could not but speak of those things,—for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." See Notes on Ps. xxxix. 2–4.

28. *My soul melteth.* Marg., *droppeth.* The Hebrew word here employed—דָּלַף, *dalaph*—means to drop, to drip, to distil, spoken of a house, as when the rain drops through the roof, Eccl. x. 18; then, to shed tears, to weep, Job xvi. 20,—and this seems to be the meaning here. The idea of

ness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29 Remove *f* from me the way of lying; and grant me thy law graciously.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me.*

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to *g* shame.

f Prov. xxx. 8. *g* Isa. xlix. 23.

melting is not properly in the word, and the term *weep* would better express the meaning. His soul seemed to drop tears. It overflowed with tears. Yet there is an idea of *abundant* or *constant* weeping. It is not a gush of emotion, as when we say of one that he is "*bathed* in tears;" it is the idea of a steady flow or dropping of tears—slow, silent, but constant—as if the soul were dripping away or dissolving. Thus the idea is more striking and beautiful than that of *melting*. It is quiet but continuous grief that slowly wears away the soul. There are two kinds of sorrow:—(*a*) the one represented by *floods* of tears, like fierce torrents that sweep all away, and are soon passed; (*b*) the other is the gentle dropping—the constant wearing—the slow attrition caused by inward grief, that secretly but certainly wears away the soul. The latter is more common, and more difficult to be borne than the other. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "My soul slumbereth." ¶ *For heaviness.* This word means grief, sorrow, vexation. Prov. xiv. 13; xvii. 21. It is here silent grief; hidden sorrow. How many thus pine in secret, till life slowly wears away, and they sink to the grave. ¶ *Strengthen thou me.* Give me strength to meet this constant wearing away—this slow work of sorrow. We need strength to bear great and sudden sorrow; we need it *not less* to bear that which constantly wears upon us; which makes our sleep uneasy; which preys upon our nerves, and slowly eats away our life. ¶ *According unto thy word.* See vers. 9, 25.

29. *Remove from me.* Take it from me; cause it to depart; let me not be under its influence or power. ¶ *The way of lying.* Every false, deceitful, hypocritical way. We are not to suppose that the psalmist was addicted to lying, but that he felt he was, like all men, in danger of acting from false views, from wrong motives, or under the influence of delusion and deceit. It is a prayer that he might always be sincere and truthful. No man who knows his own heart can doubt the propriety of this prayer. On nothing does a man need more to examine himself; in nothing does he more need the grace of God, than that he may be *sincere.* ¶ *And grant me thy law graciously.* The knowledge of thy law; grace to obey thy law. The single word rendered "grant graciously" is a word which implies the idea of *mercy* or *favour.* It was not a thing which he claimed as a right; it was that for which he was dependent on the mercy of God.

30. *I have chosen the way of truth.* Among all the paths of life I have selected this. I prefer this. I desire to walk in this. Religion is, wherever it exists, a matter of *preference* or *choice;* and the friend of God *prefers* his service to the service of the world. ¶ *Thy judgments.* Thy statutes; thy laws. ¶ *Have I laid* before me. I have set them before my mind as the guide of my conduct; I have made their observance the end and aim of my life.

31. *I have stuck unto thy testimonies.* The word here rendered *stuck* is the same which in ver. 25 is rendered *cleave:*—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust." It means here that he had adhered to the testimonies of God as if he had been *glued* to them, or as if he and they were firmly united together. He had so adhered to them that he could not be detached from them. ¶ *O* LORD, *put me not to*

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge [h] my heart.

HE.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep [i] it *unto* the end.

34 Give [k] me understanding, and [l] I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36 Incline my heart [m] unto thy testimonies, and not to [n] covetousness.

h Isa. lx. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 11.
i Rev. ii. 26. *k* Prov. ii. 6.
l Deut. iv. 6. *m* Jer. xxiv. 7.
n Luke xii. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 10; Heb. xiii. 5.

shame. Let me not be disappointed or confounded; let all my anticipations of the good effects of obeying thy law be realized; let me find all that I have hoped for; let me partake of thy friendship and favour as I desire. See Notes on ver. 6.

32. *I will run the way of thy commandments.* That is, I will not merely keep them—which might be expressed by "I will *walk* in them,"—but I will *hasten* to keep them; I will do it with alacrity, as when one runs to accomplish an object. I will devote to them all the energies of my life. ¶ *When thou shalt enlarge my heart.* Or, more literally, "For thou wilt enlarge my heart;" expressing confidence that God *would* do this, so that he would be thus inclined and enabled to keep his commandments. It is an acknowledgment of dependence, and at the same time the expression of a confident belief that God *would* grant him the grace needful for him. The phrase "to enlarge the heart" means to make it free; to deliver it from all hindrances to what is right; to fill it with noble and holy purposes; to stimulate and animate it. The heart is contracted or made narrow by selfishness, pride, vanity, ambition, covetousness; it is made large by charity, love, hope, benevolence. Sin narrows the soul; religion enlarges it.

33. *Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes.* This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the letter *He* (or *h*). The word rendered *teach* means properly to throw, to cast, to hurl; and then, to teach,—as if truth were thrown and scattered abroad. The sentiment is the same as in ver. 12. ¶ *And I shall keep it* unto *the end.* Always. To the end of life. His keeping it depended on grace given to him continually to dispose and enable him to do it.

34. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.* Give me right views of it, of its nature and obligation. It is not a prayer that God would give him the *faculty* of understanding or intelligence; but that he would enable him to take just views of the law. The word is the same as in ver. 27, rendered there, "Make me to understand." ¶ *Yea, I shall observe it with* my *whole heart.* See ver. 2. I will keep it with undivided affections; I will make it the sole guide of my life.

35. *Make me to go in the path,* etc. That is, Incline me to it; so direct me that I shall thus walk. It is an acknowledgment of his dependence on God, that he might be able to carry out the cherished purposes of his soul. ¶ *For therein do I delight.* See ver. 16. I am conscious of having pleasure in thy commandments; of having a strong desire to keep them, and I pray for grace that I may be able to do it. Real *delight* in the law of God is one of the best means of securing its observance; one of the best evidences that it will be kept.

36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.* Cause my heart to be inclined to them, or to be disposed to keep them. This, too, is a recognition of dependence, and a prayer for guidance. ¶ *And not to covetousness.* To gain; to the love of money. This

37 [1] Turn away mine eyes from beholding [o] vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way.

[1] *Make to pass.* [o] Isa. xxxiii. 15.

38 Stablish [p] thy word unto thy servant, who *is devoted* to thy fear.

39 Turn away my reproach

[p] 2 Sam. vii. 25; 2 Cor. i. 20.

seems to be referred to here as the principal thing which would turn away the heart from religion, or as that from which the most danger was to be feared. There are undoubtedly many other things which will do this, —for all sin will do it; but this was the chief danger which the psalmist apprehended in his own case, and perhaps he meant to refer to this as the principal danger on this subject which besets the path of man. There are many more persons turned away from the service of God, and kept away from it, by covetousness than there are by any other one sin. When the psalmist prays that God would not "*incline*" his heart to covetousness, the language is similar to that in the Lord's prayer—"And lead us not into temptation." That is, Restrain us from it; let us not be put in circumstances where we shall be in danger of it. We are not to suppose that God exerts any *positive* influence either to make a man covetous, or to tempt him. See James i. 13, 14.

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.* Vain things; wicked things; things which would be likely to lead me astray from what is real and true. Comp. Isa. xxxiii. 15; Job xxxi. 1. Marg. here, as in Heb., *make to pass.* Make my eyes to pass rapidly from such objects, that I may not look at them, may not contemplate them, may not dwell upon them. There is danger in looking on sin steadily; in surveying its features; in returning to contemplate it. An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it;—and this is a benevolent law, lest we should be miserable when we are under a necessity of looking on it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has eyelids; and as he *can* close his eyes, so he should often do it. ¶ And *quicken thou me in thy way.* Endow me with life, energy, vigour, that I may walk in thy way.

38. *Stablish thy word unto thy servant.* Confirm it; make it *seem* firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there. There is a class of men whose minds are naturally sceptical and unbelieving, and for such men such a prayer is peculiarly appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the word of God may always seem to them to be true; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief. ¶ *Who* is devoted *to thy fear.* Literally, "Who," or which, "to thy fear." This may refer either to the author of the psalm, or to the word of God. It may mean that *he* was among those who feared,—that is, worshipped God; or, that the word of God had reference to the "fear,"—that is, to the worship of God, or was designed to secure that. The construction seems to demand the latter interpretation; and then the prayer is, that God would confirm his faith in that "word"—in that revealed truth—which was designed to secure the worship of God.

39. *Turn away my reproach.* The reproach which is likely to come upon me from being a professed worshipper of God. In all ages good men have been exposed to this reproach. ¶ *Which I fear.* Which I have reason to apprehend will come upon me. This may not mean that he was personally afraid of it, but merely that he had reason to apprehend that he was exposed to

which I fear: for thy judgments *are* good.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken [q] me in thy righteousness.

VAU.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD; *even* thy salvation, according to thy word.

42 So shall I [1] have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

43 And take not [r] the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

[q] John x. 10.

[1] Or, *answer him that reproacheth me in a thing.*

[r] Isa. lix. 21.

it. The prayer is proper, for there is nothing which our nature makes us shrink back from more than *reproach.* Comp. ver. 22; Ps. lxix. 9, 20; Rom. xv. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 10. The word *reproach* in the original is the same which denotes shame or dishonour. ¶ *For thy judgments* are *good.* Thy statutes; thy laws. I *know* they are good. I feel that I desire to obey them. I pray, therefore, that obedience on my part to that which is good may not subject me to shame; that men may see that thy laws are good, and that it is *not* a matter of reproach to obey them.

40. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.* I have earnestly desired them. See Notes on ver. 20. ¶ *Quicken me in thy righteousness.* Make me to live; to live in obedience to thy righteous laws. See Notes on vers. 25, 37.

41. *Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD. This commences a new portion of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter *Vau,* or *v.* There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section of the psalm (vers. 41–48) the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction,—*vau.* This does not here indicate a *connexion,* as with us the conjunction "*and*" would naturally do; but is a mere artificial arrangement in order that the verse *may* begin with that letter, and it in no manner affects the sense. The phrase "Let thy mercies come" is literally, "and thy mercies shall come," or "and let thy mercies come." That is, Let thy mercy be manifested to me; let me experience thy mercy and thy favour. ¶ Even *thy salvation.* Mercy connected with salvation, or that leads to salvation. ¶ *According to thy word.* According to the promises of thy word; according to the arrangements which thou hast made, and hast revealed. The only hope of mercy is that which is held out in the word of God.

42. *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me.* I shall have something by which I may reply to those who calumniate me. So the Saviour replied to the suggestions of the tempter almost wholly by passages of Scripture (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10); and so, in many cases, the best answer that can be given to reproaches on the subject of religion will be found in the very words of Scripture. A man of little learning, except that which he has derived from the Bible, may often thus silence the cavils and reproaches of the learned sceptic; a man of simple-hearted, pure piety, with no weapon but the word of God, may often thus be better armed than if he had all the arguments of the schools at his command. Comp. Eph. vi. 17. ¶ *For I trust in thy word.* I believe it; I rely on it; I confide in that, as my only comfort and protection.

43. *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.* Do not take it entirely or altogether from me. Let me not be utterly hopeless; let me be at no time without *some* evidence that thy word dwells in me with sustaining and sanctifying power. The prayer seems to have been offered

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at [1] liberty: [s] for I seek thy precepts.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, [t] and will not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto

[1] *large.* [s] John viii. 32, 36; Gal. v. 1, 13. [t] Matt. x. 18, 19; Acts xxvi. 1, etc.

when the mind was troubled and in doubt, and when it *seemed* as if all hope and all trust in the truth of God would vanish. The words rendered "utterly" mean "to very much;" that is, *altogether* or *entirely*. Let it not be done until the *extreme* shall be reached. ¶ *For I have hoped in thy judgments.* I *do* trust in thy word, and it is my *only* trust. If that is gone, all is gone. As long as I can hold on to that, even in the slightest degree, I am safe. When all else fails, if *that* has not utterly failed me, I shall be secure.

44. *So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.* At all times and in all places; in this world and the world to come. This indicates a purpose to do it, and an assurance that he would do it, if God should enable him to retain *even the slightest hold* on the truth.

45. *And I will walk at liberty.* Marg., *at large.* Luther renders it, "*freely.*" The Septuagint, "*in a broad place.*" The Hebrew word means *wide, broad, large, spacious.* The reference is to that which is free and open; that in which there are no limits, checks, restraints;—where a man does what he pleases. The meaning here is, that he would feel he was free. He would not be restrained by evil passions and corrupt desires. He would be delivered from those things which seemed to fetter his goings. This does not here refer so much to external troubles or hindrances, to being oppressed and straitened by external foes, as to internal enemies —to the servitude of sin—to the slavery of appetite and passion. Comp. Notes on Rom. vii. 9–14. See also Job xxxvi. 16; Ps. cxviii. 5. The margin well expresses the sense of the passage. ¶ *For I seek thy precepts.* I seek or endeavour to obey them. I seek them as the guide of my life. I ask nothing else to direct me.

46. *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,* etc. In the presence of men of most elevated rank. I will not be ashamed to avow my belief in thy word before those in power—whether friendly or unfriendly to thee and to thy cause. I will not disguise my belief in thy truth with any desire to secure their favour; I will not be intimidated from expressing my faith by any dread of their frowns. Comp. Matt. x. 18, 19; Acts iv. 19; v. 29; xxvi. 2.

47. *And I will delight myself,* etc. See Notes on ver. 16.

48. *My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments,* etc. As an expression of delight or rejoicing, as men lift up their hands with their voice when they give expression to joy. It denotes a high state of joy, such as leads to an outward expression; not merely that which exists in calm contemplation, but where the heart is full, and when it finds outward expression. ¶ *And I will meditate in thy statutes.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2. I will indicate my joy—my happiness—in thy commandments in every way possible;—by outward expressions, and by deep and calm contemplation when I am alone;—in my daily employments, in solitude, in the night-watches. This is indicative always of true religion.

49. *Remember the word unto thy servant.* This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each

thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to [u] hope.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision; *yet* [v] have I not declined from thy law.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD: and have comforted myself.

[u] 1 Pet. i. 13, 21.

[v] Job xxiii. 11; Isa. xxxviii. 3.

verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Zain*—answering to our *z*. There is nothing peculiar in this portion of the psalm as indicated by the letter. The language here is a prayer that God would not forget what he had promised; that all that he had said might be fulfilled; that the expectations and hopes which he had raised in the mind might be realised. It is language which *may* be used with reverence, and without any implication that God *would* forget,—as a child might with propriety and love ask a parent to *remember* a promise which he had made. ¶ *Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.* That is, All the hope which I have has been excited by thy word; thy promises. I have no other source of hope; I cherish no other hope. I pray now, since that hope has been thus excited in me, that I may realise all I have been led to desire and to expect. The word of God is the only foundation of hope for men; and when our hopes are fairly built on that, we have a right to appeal to God that he will make it good.

50. *This* is *my comfort in my affliction.* Comp. Rom. xv. 4. The word here rendered *comfort* occurs only here and in Job vi. 10. The obvious meaning is, that his only consolation in his affliction was derived from the word of God; the word which had caused him to hope, and the word by which he had been quickened or made alive. The particular design of this is to show the value of the word of God as a source of comfort in trouble. ¶ *For thy word hath quickened me.* Has made me alive; or, caused me to live. That is, the word, the truth of God, had been the instrument of calling him from the death of sin, and of imparting to him new life, or had been the means of his regeneration. Comp. James i. 18; 1 Cor. iv. 15; Heb. iv. 12; 1 Pet. i. 23. As it was by this "word" that he had been made alive, so his only comfort was in that word, and it was to him a just ground of consolation that God *had* brought him from the death of sin, and had imparted to him spiritual life.

51. *The proud have had me greatly in derision.* Those of rank; those in high life:—perhaps, as we should say, the gay and fashionable world. They have ridiculed me; they have held me up to contempt for my scruples, my seriousness, my conscientiousness, my unwillingness to mingle with them in the pursuits, the pastimes, the frivolities of life. It is now no new thing to be held in contempt by the "proud" and the gay, on account of serious piety; to be thus held in contempt has been rather the rule than the exception in the treatment which the friends of religion have received from the world. ¶ Yet *have I not declined from thy law.* I have not been deterred from the avowal of my religious belief; I have not turned away from the duties of piety on account of the ridicule and scorn to which I have been exposed. Comp. Ps. xliv. 17–19.

52. *I remembered.* In my troubles. ¶ *Thy judgments of old.* The word *judgments* here seems to refer to the Divine dealings, whether expressed in the law of God, or in the actual administration of his government over the world. The words "of old" do not seem here to refer to the *eternity past*, as the phrase sometimes does now, but to the constancy and uniformity of the principles of the Divine administra-

53 Horror *w* hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

w Ezra ix 3.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

tion. The psalmist remembered that the principles of that administration had been always the same; that the law of God was always the same; and that, therefore, he might *confide* in God. What God had done formerly he would do now; the favour which he had shown in times past he would continue to show now. In the trials of life, in the changes which occur, in the apparent wreck of things, in the fearful prospect of disaster and ruin at any time, it is well for us to *think* of the unchanging principles which mark the Divine dealings. Under such an administration, all who put their trust in God *must* be safe. ¶ *And have comforted myself.* I have found consolation in this. When all else seemed to fail, it was a comfort to reflect that an unchangeable God presided over the affairs of men. We could not put confidence in a God given to change.

53. *Horror hath taken hold upon me.* Has seized me; has overpowered and overwhelmed me. I shudder; I tremble; I am afraid; I am filled with distress. Luther, "I am burnt up." The Hebrew word—זַלְעָפָה, *zalaphah*—is from a verb meaning to be hot; to glow; and the idea in the word is that of violent heat; then, a glow or burning, as of a wind—the *simoom* of the desert. See Ps. xi. 6, where the word is translated *horrible tempest*,—in the margin, *burning*. The word occurs only in that passage, in the one before us, and in Lam. v. 10, where it is rendered *terrible* [*famine*],—in the margin, *terrors*, or *storms*. The state referred to here is that of one who sees the storm of burning wind and sand approaching; who expects every moment to be overcome and buried; whose soul trembles with consternation. ¶ *Because of the wicked*, etc. Their conduct alarms me. Their danger appals me. Their condition overwhelms me. I see them rebelling against God. I see them exposed to his wrath. I see the grave just before them, and the awful scenes of judgment near. I see them about to be cast off, and to sink to endless woe, and my soul is transfixed with horror. The contemplation overwhelms me with uncontrollable anguish. Can such things be? Can men be thus in danger? And can they be calm and composed, when so near such awful horrors? No man can look on the world of despair without horror; no one can truly realize that his fellow-men are exposed to the horrors of that abode without having his soul filled with anguish. Strange that all men do not feel thus,—that impenitent men can walk along on the verge of the grave and of hell *without* horror,—that pious men, good men, praying men, can look upon their friends in that condition without having their souls filled with unutterable anguish. Comp. Ps. cxix. 136; Rom. ix. 1–4; Luke xix. 41.

54. *Thy statutes.* Thy law; thy commandments. ¶ *Have been my songs.* Have been to me a source of joy; have been my happiness, my consolation, my delight. I have found pleasure in meditating on them; I have had peace and joy in them in the day of loneliness and trouble. The psalmist rejoiced, doubtless, as the good now do, (*a*) In law itself; law, as a rule of order; law, as a guide of conduct; law, as a security for safety; (*b*) in *such* a law as that of God—so pure, so holy, so fitted to promote the happiness of man; (*c*) in the stability of that law, as constituting his own personal security, the ground of his hope; (*d*) in law in its influence on the universe, preserving order, and securing harmony.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, [x] and have kept thy law.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH.

57 *Thou art* my portion, [y] O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

58 I entreated thy [1] favour with *my* whole [z] heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

59 I thought [a] on my ways,

[x] Ps. lxiii. 6; lxxvii. 6.
[y] Jer. x. 16; Lam. iii. 24.
[1] *face.*
[z] Heb. x. 22.
[a] Lam. iii. 40, 41; Lu. xv. 17, 18.

¶ *In the house of my pilgrimage.* In my life considered as a journey to another world; in my pilgrimage through the desert of this world; amidst rocks, and sands, and desolation; among tribes of savage men, wanderers, robbers, freebooters; with no home, no place of shelter; exposed to cold, and rain, and sleet, and ice, and snow, as pilgrims are,—for to all these is the "pilgrim"—the wayfarer—exposed, and all these represent the condition of one passing through this world to a better (comp. Heb. xi. 13). Here, says the psalmist, I sang. I found joy in these scenes by thinking on the pure law—the pure and holy truth of God. I comforted myself with the feeling that there *is* law; that there is just government; that there is a God; that I am under the protection of law; that I am not alone, but that there is one who guides me by his truth. Comp. Notes on Job xxxv. 10. See Acts xvi. 25; Ps. xxxiv. 1.

55. *I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night*, etc. I have thought on thee in the night, when on my bed; I have done it in the night of calamity and sorrow. See Notes on Ps. lxiii. 6.

56. *This I had, because I kept thy precepts.* Literally, "This was to me;" that is, This has happened to me; this has occurred. This joyful remembrance of thy law in the night of affliction (ver. 50); this stability and firmness on my part in keeping thy law when proud men have derided me (ver. 51); this comfort which I have derived from meditating on thy statutes (ver. 52); this solicitude for the welfare of others (ver. 53); this peace which I have enjoyed in thy law in the house of my pilgrimage (ver. 54); and this consolation which I have had in thee in the night-season (ver. 55);—all this has been granted to me because I have kept thy statutes; because I have sought to be obedient—to serve thee—to find my happiness in thee. These are the proper fruits and effects of keeping the law of God. Such peace does it impart; so much does it do to sustain and comfort the soul.

57. Thou art *my portion, O* LORD. This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Cheth*, which may be represented in English by *hh*. On the meaning of the language here, see Notes on Ps. xvi. 5. God was to him what other men seek in wealth, honour, pleasure, fame. To him, God was all and in all. He asked nothing else. ¶ *I have said.* I have formed the purpose, and have expressed it. It is the deliberate and settled design of my life. ¶ *That I would keep thy words.* That I would obey thee at all times; that I would keep all thy commandments.

58. *I entreated thy favour.* Marg., as in Heb., *face.* That is, he prayed that God would lift upon him the light of his countenance; that he would not avert his face from him in anger. ¶ *With* my *whole heart.* With sincere, undivided affections. See vers. 2, 10, 34; Ps. ix. 1. ¶ *Be merciful unto me according to thy word.* See Notes on ver. 41.

59. *I thought on my ways.* This language most naturally refers to the time of conversion, and may be employed without impropriety to de-

and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60 I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.

61 The [1] bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

[1] Or, *companies.*

scribe the process of a sinner's turning to God. It would seem to be descriptive of the experience of the author of the psalm when he became personally interested in the subject of religion. The first step in such a work is reflection on the course of life which has been led; on the guilt of such a course; and on the consequences. It is a *pause* in the career of sin and folly—a pause for reflection and thought. Comp. Luke xv. 17, 18. No one is converted without such reflection; and as soon as a sinner can be made to pause and reflect on his course, there is hope that he will be converted. Assuredly it is proper for all, whatever may be their circumstances in life, to pause from time to time; to reflect; to ask what will be the consequences of the course of life which is pursued. ¶ *And turned my feet.* Changed my course of life. He himself did this in fact; and he does not hesitate to say that it was he who thus turned. His own agency was employed. He does not say that he "*waited*" for God to turn him; or that he found he could not turn of himself, but that *he* turned; *he* paused; *he* reflected; *he* changed his course of life. This is true in conversion always. There is an actual *turning from sin;* an actual *turning to God.* The sinner turns. He leaves an old path, and treads a new one. He does this as the conscious result of reflection on the course which he was pursuing; and there is nothing in his actual turning, or in his whole future course, which is not the proper result of reflection, or which a proper reflection on the course of life would not lead to and justify. Man himself is always *active* in conversion. That is, he does something; he changes; he repents; he believes; he turns to God; it is not *God* that changes, that repents, that believes, that turns;—it is the man himself. It is, indeed, by the grace and help of God;—but the effect of that grace is not to make him idly wait; it is to rouse him to effort; to lead him to *act.* ¶ *Unto thy testimonies.* Thy law, considered as the Divine testimony in regard to what is right.

60. *I made haste.* This language further describes the process of conversion. There was no delay; there was no excuse offered. He acted at once under his conviction of what was right. He did not ask permission to defer it to a future time; he did not attempt to avoid the duty; he did not plead inability; he did not give himself merely to the "use of means;" he did not rely on prayer, and reading, and reflection; but *he did the thing, and he did it at once.* This is conversion; and if all convicted sinners would follow this example, and do at once that which they are commanded to do, and which they know they ought to do, there would be in no case any difficulty about conversion, for the main difficulty in conversion lies in the fact that the sinner is not willing to obey God at once; that he will not break away from his sins; that he endeavours to excuse himself; that he pleads for delay; that he waits for *God* to do what *he himself* ought to do. ¶ *And delayed not to keep thy commandments.* I did not continue to go on in a course of sin, but I forsook my sin and obeyed.

61. *The bands of the wicked.* Marg., *companies.* The Hebrew word properly means a cord, a rope; then a snare, gin, net; then, a band or a company of men. The reference is to some time in the life of the psalmist when he was surrounded by wicked men. ¶ *Have robbed me.* Rather, have surrounded me; have environed me—for so the Hebrew word means. ¶ But *I have not forgotten thy law.*

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

63 I *am* a companion [b] of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with

[b] Prov. xiii. 20.

I have not been deterred from keeping it by the dangers to which I have been exposed.

62. *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee.* In the usual times of repose; when men are commonly lying in unconscious slumber. My heart is so interested in thy law—my soul is so full—that I am kept wakeful by meditating upon it, and I arise from my bed and offer thee praise. The Hebrew here means, literally, *the half*, or *halving* of the night, the night considered as divided into two equal portions. The idea is, that his mind was so full of the subject that he would take this unusual time to give vent to his feelings. The mind *may* be so full of love to the law—the word—of God, that nothing will satisfy it but such unusual acts of devotion. The Saviour rose up a great while before day, and went out into a solitary place and there prayed (Mark i. 35); and on one occasion at least he continued all night in prayer to God (Luke vi. 12). ¶ *Because of thy righteous judgments.* I do this on account of the interest which I have in those judgments or laws of righteousness. I love them *as* laws; I love them as *righteous* laws.

63. *I* am *a companion of all* them *that fear thee.* I find my associates and friends among those who worship thee; not with the profane and the wicked. "A man is known by the company that he keeps;" and it is an evidence of piety when we seek our companions and friends among the pious. It shows where the heart is; what the preferences are; what are the tastes; what is the real condition of the soul. We seek our friends in accordance with our tastes and preferences; our love to God is indicated by our love to his friends. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. ¶ *And of them that keep thy precepts.* That obey thy law. On the sentiment here, comp. Notes on Ps. i. 1. A man may determine much in regard to his own character by asking himself what is the character of his chosen friends and companions. A member of a church should regard it as a dark sign against himself in regard to his piety, if his chosen friends are taken from the world, and not from the professed friends of God; if he finds more pleasure in their society, and in the scenes where they meet, than he does in the society of Christians however humble, or in places where they assemble for prayer and praise.

64. *The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.* Full of the proofs of thy goodness and compassion. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 5. This is the expression of a heart full of love to God and to his word. In such a state of mind as the psalmist was in, the goodness of God is seen everywhere. The best preparation for seeing evidence that God is good is a heart full of love. Then the proofs of that love spring up on every side—as when we truly love a friend we find constant proofs of his excellency of character. ¶ *Teach me thy statutes.* I desire to see more and more of thy law. Thou art so gracious and merciful, the evidence of thy goodness is so wide-spread round about me, that it leads me to desire to see more and more of thyself and thy law.

65. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Teth*, corresponding to our *t*. The use of this letter, however, does nothing to mark the sense. The literal meaning of the phrase here is,

thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

66 Teach [c] me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted [d] I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.

c Jer. iii. 15.

d Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Heb. xii. 11.

"Good hast thou done with thy servant;" and the idea is, that God had been good, and had done good to him. In the review of his own life he sees good, and good alone. Even in afflictions and trials this is all that he sees. ¶ *According unto thy word.* According to thy promises; or, according to the principles of thy word. That is, the whole effect of the revealed truth of God upon him had been good. It was designed for his good; it had produced good only. Truth and law do nothing but good, and the welfare of individuals, and of a community, is promoted just in proportion as truth and law prevail.

66. *Teach me good judgment.* The word here rendered *judgment* means, properly, *taste*,—that power by which we determine the quality of things as sweet, bitter, sour, etc. Then it is applied to the mind or understanding, as that by which we determine the moral quality of things, or decide what is right or wrong; wise or foolish; good or evil. Here it means that he desired to have in full exercise the faculty of appreciating what is right, and of distinguishing it from what is wrong. ¶ *And knowledge.* Knowledge of the truth; knowledge of thy will; knowledge of duty. ¶ *For I have believed thy commandments.* I have confided in thy commandments. He believed that such a keeping of the law of God would be connected with a correct view of things. The keeping of the commands of God is one of the best means of growing in true knowledge, and of cultivating the understanding;—of promoting a just taste or perception of what is true, and of developing the powers of the soul in the best proportions. Comp. John vii. 17.

67. *Before I was afflicted.* The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, "Before I was humbled." The Hebrew word has the general sense of being afflicted, and may refer to any kind of trial. ¶ *I went astray.* The Hebrew word means to wander; to err; to do wrong; to transgress. Num. xv. 28; Job xii. 16. It here means that he forgot his duty; that he fell into sin; that he departed from what was right; that he embraced erroneous views; that he lived in the neglect of his soul, the neglect of duty, and the neglect of God. Prosperity had not led him to fulfil duty; to seek salvation; to trust in God. This was, in his case, as it is in thousands of others, the experience of his life. Hence affliction often becomes so necessary to check us when we are going astray, and so useful in recalling us to the ways of duty and of truth. ¶ *But now have I kept thy word.* Since I was afflicted. The effect has been to recall me from my wanderings, and to turn me to paths of duty and holiness. This is an effect often—very often—experienced; this is language which can be used by many a child of God. Of those who are the children of God it may be said that they are *always* benefited *sooner* or *later* by afflictions. It may not be at the time of the affliction (comp. Heb. xii. 11), but the *ultimate* effect is in all cases to benefit them. Some error is corrected; some evil habit changed; some mode of life not consistent with religion is forsaken;—pride is humbled; the heart is quickened in duty; habits of prayer are resumed or formed; the affections are fixed on a better world; the soul is made more gentle, calm, humble, spiritual, pure. Afflictions are among the most precious means of grace. They are entirely under the direction of God. They may be endlessly varied, and adapted

68 Thou [e] *art* good, and doest good: teach me thy statutes.
69 The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.
70 Their heart is as fat as grease: *but* I delight in thy law.

[e] Ps. xxv. 8; Matt. xix. 17.

to the case of every individual. God knows every heart, and the best way to reach any heart. By sickness; by disappointment; by loss of property; by bereavement; by blighted hopes; by the ingratitude of others; by the unkindness of professed friends, and the malice of enemies; by domestic troubles; by the misconduct of children—perhaps the sorest of all human ills, and the hardest to bear;—in ten thousand ways God can reach the heart, and break and crush it, and make it ready for the entrance of truth,—as the farmer breaks and pulverizes the soil by the plough and the harrow, so that it shall be prepared to receive the seed. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxviii. 24–29. Among those things for which good men have most occasion for thankfulness are afflictions; and when we lie down on the bed of death, and look over life and the Divine dealings with us through life, as the glories of heaven are about to open upon us, we shall feel that among the chiefest mercies of God are those dealings of his holy hand, trying at the time, which kept us from going astray, or which recalled us when we had wandered from him, —and *that in our life, now closing, there has not been one trial too much.*

68. *Thou* art *good.* See Notes on Ps. c. 5; cvii. 1. ¶ *And doest good.* As the expression or manifestation of goodness. The goodness of God is not a mere sentiment; not mere feeling; not an inactive principle; not a mere wish:—it finds expression in acts which tend to promote the happiness of his creatures everywhere. ¶ *Teach me thy statutes.* See Notes on vers. 12, 26. As one of the acts of the Divine goodness, the psalmist prays that God will make him more and more acquainted with his law.

69. *The proud.* The psalmist had before referred to the *proud* as those from whom he had suffered injury, or as having been exposed to their derision. See Notes on ver. 51. He here reverts to another form in which he had suffered from them. ¶ *Have forged a lie against me.* Comp. Job xiii. 4. The word rendered *forged,* means to patch together; and then it is applied to charges or accusations against any one, perhaps from their being *made up* (as they often are) of shreds and patches,—hints, small matters, things having no necessary connexion in themselves, but brought together as if they pertained to the same transaction,—words dropped here and there in conversation, which, being artfully woven together, seem to make out a plausible case against a man. Most slanders are formed and sustained in this way; for it is rare that an absolutely forged slander is uttered against a man, or that a charge is brought which cannot be made to have plausibility from such circumstances as those referred to above. Even the most pure and circumspect cannot always avoid this; for there is something in every man's life of which a malignant and cunning enemy may take advantage, and which he may weave into a story which some will believe, and which it may not be easy to confute. A malicious man may thus start a slander which may require years to correct, and which may even operate injuriously against a man all his life. ¶ But *I will keep thy precepts with* my *whole heart.* Notwithstanding their accusations, and their attempts to turn me away from thee, or to represent me as false and hypocritical. Whatever they may do; whatever reports they may start to my disadvantage, it is my fixed purpose to obey entirely and always thy law. See Notes on ver. 51.

70. *Their heart is as fat as grease.*

71 *It* [f] *is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

72 The [g] law of thy mouth *is* better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

[f] ver. 67. [g] Ps. xix. 10; Prov. viii. 11, 19.

JOD.

73 Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, [h] that I may learn thy commandments.

[h] vers. 34, 144; Ps. cxi. 10.

They are prospered. They have health, property, influence, comforts of all kinds. Heaven appears to smile upon them, and it *seems* as if it were one effect of a wicked course of life to *make* men prosperous. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 10; lxxiii. 7. ¶ But *I delight in thy law.* Though its observance should not be attended by any such results as seem to follow wickedness, though I am poor, emaciated, pale,—disappointed, slandered, persecuted,—though my lot in life is among the lowly and the despised,—yet I will adhere to my purpose to keep thy law. It is, and it shall be, my delight, whatever may be the effects of so observing it. See ver. 35.

71. It is *good for me that I have been afflicted.* See Notes on ver. 67. Whatever may have been the form of the affliction, it was good for me. The design was benevolent; the result has been my own benefit. This will be the experience sooner or later resulting from all the afflictions of the righteous. ¶ *That I might learn thy statutes.* That I might be brought more fully to understand what they require; and that I might be led to conform to them. It is implied here (*a*) that this is the *tendency* of affliction; and (*b*) that this is an advantage—a *good.* Anything that will lead a man to obey God is a blessing and a favour. Whatever leads a sinner to secure the salvation of his soul is a gain to him. No matter what it may cost; no matter what he may be required to give up; no matter to what persecutions and troubles it may expose him; no matter what he may suffer, or how long he may suffer; no matter though poverty, contempt, toil—even the rack or the stake—may be the consequence of his religion,—yet it is a *gain* to him; and he will be thankful for it in the end,—for nothing that can be endured in this life can be compared with the sufferings of the world of despair; nothing on earth can be "compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us in heaven." See Notes on Rom. viii. 18.

72. *The law of thy mouth.* The law which proceeds out of thy mouth, or which thou hast spoken. ¶ Is *better unto me.* The Hebrew is, "Good to me is the law of thy mouth above thousands of gold and silver." ¶ *Than thousands of gold and silver.* Than any amount of wealth. It is to me the most valuable possession; that which I prize above all other things. Comp. Notes on Ps. xix. 10.

73. *Thy hands have made me.* This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Jod*—or *i*—the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, called in Matt. v. 18, *jot;* "one *jot* or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." The words "thy *hands* have made me" are expressive of the idea that he had been formed or moulded by God,—as the hands are the instruments by which we do anything. See Notes on Job x. 8; comp. Ps. c. 3. ¶ *And fashioned me.* Fitted me; shaped me; formed me as I am. He had received alike his existence and the particular form of his existence from God—as a man makes a statue or image. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. 13–16. ¶ *Give me understanding,* etc. As I have derived my being from thee, so I am wholly dependent on thee to carry out the purpose for which I have been made. My Maker alone can give me understanding. I have no resources in myself. See ver. 34.

74 They [i] that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* [1] right, and *that* thou in faithfulness [k] hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be [2] for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.

i Ps. xxxiv. 2. [1] *righteousness.*

k Rev. iii. 19. [2] *to comfort me.*

74. *They that fear thee.* Those who worship thee; thy friends; the pious and the good. ¶ *Will be glad when they see me.* They will welcome me to their society; they will regard and treat me as a friend and brother. It is implied here that he considered this to be an honour—a thing to be desired. He valued the friendship and affection of those who feared and served God, and he made it an object so to live as to be worthy of their affection. Wicked men—men of the world—do *not* value that. They are satisfied with the friendship of those who, like themselves, have no fear of God. To a truly pious mind, the friendship of those who love God is of more value than that of any others; though in the one case they are poor and despised, and though in the other they are rich and of exalted rank. See Notes on ver. 63. *Because I have hoped in thy word.* See Notes on ver. 49.

75. *I know, O* LORD. I feel assured; I entertain no doubt on the subject. This was the conviction of the mind of the psalmist in affliction. Mysterious as the trial may have been, hard as it may have been to bear, long as it may have been continued, and varied as may have been the forms of the trial, yet he had no doubt that it was all right; that it was for the best purposes; and that it was in strict accordance with what was best. ¶ *That thy judgments.* This does not here refer to the *laws* of God, but to the Divine dealings; to those afflictions which came in the way of *judgments*, or which might be regarded as expressive of the Divine view of his conduct and life. ¶ Are *right.* Marg., as in Heb., *righteousness.* They were in accordance with what was right; they were so strictly just, that they might be called *righteousness itself.* This implied the utmost confidence in God, the most absolute submission to his will. ¶ *And* that *thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* In faithfulness to my soul; in faithfulness to my own best interest. It was not arbitrary; it was not from malice; it was not that the affliction had come by chance; it was because God loved his soul, and sought his welfare. It was because *God* saw that there was some good reason why it should be done; that there was some evil to be checked; some improper conduct to be corrected; some lesson which he would be the better for learning; some happy influence on his life here, and on his happiness in heaven, which would be more than a compensation for all that he would suffer.

76. *Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.* Marg., as in Heb., *to comfort me.* The word rendered *merciful kindness* means mercy, favour, grace, kindness; and the idea is, that all his consolation—all that he expected or desired—must be derived from mere favour; from the goodness of God. He had no source of comfort in himself, and he had no claim on God for comfort. It was through mercy alone that he could have happiness of any kind. ¶ *According to thy word,* etc. See Notes on ver. 25.

77. *Let thy tender mercies come unto me.* See Notes on ver. 41. ¶ *That I may live.* It is evident that this was uttered in view of some great calamity by which his life was threatened. He was dependent for

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without [l] a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound [m] in thy statutes, that I be not [n] ashamed.

[l] 1 Pet. ii. 20.

[m] Deut. xxvi. 16; Ez. xi. 19. [n] ver. 6.

life,—for recovery from sickness, or for deliverance from danger,—wholly on the compassion of God. ¶ *For thy law* is *my delight.* See Notes on ver. 16; comp. vers. 24, 47. This is urged here as a reason for the Divine interposition. The meaning is, that he was a friend of God; that he had pleasure in his service and in his commandments; and that he might, therefore, with propriety, appeal to God to interpose in his behalf. This *is* a proper ground of appeal to God in our prayers, not on the ground of merit or claim, but because we may reasonably suppose that God will be disposed to protect his friends, and to deliver them in the day of trouble.

78. *Let the proud be ashamed.* Referring here to his enemies, who appear to have been in the higher ranks of life, or to have been those who prided themselves on their wealth, their station, or their influence. See Notes on ver. 51. The psalmist asks here that they might be confounded or put to shame; that is, that they might fail of accomplishing their purposes in regard to him. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 2, 3; Job vi. 20. ¶ *For they dealt perversely with me.* They were not honest; they deceived me; they took advantage of me; they were not true to their professions of friendship. Comp. Notes on Isa. lix. 3; Job viii. 3; xxxiv. 12. ¶ *Without a cause.* Heb., *by a lie.* That is, They have been guilty of falsehood in their charges or accusations against me. I have given them no occasion for such treatment, and their conduct is based on an entire misrepresentation. See Notes on John xv. 25. ¶ But *I will meditate in thy precepts.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2. I will not be diverted from thee, from thy law, from thy service, by all that man can do to me; by all the false charges which the enemies of religion may bring against me; by all the contempt or persecution that I may suffer for my attachment to thee. See Notes on vers. 23, 69.

79. *Let those that fear thee turn unto me.* Let thy friends be my friends. Let them show me favour, and count me among their companions. If the great and the powerful turn away from me; if they persecute me, and do me wrong; if they cast out my name as evil, and are unwilling to associate with me, yet let thy friends, however poor and humble, regard me with kindness, and reckon me among their number, and I shall be satisfied. ¶ *And those that have known thy testimonies.* Thy law. Those who can see and appreciate the beauty of thy commandments. This is the ground of true friendship in religion,—the common love of God, of his law, and of his service. This is a permanent ground of affection. All friendship founded on earthly distinctions; all derived from titled birth,—from rank,—from affluence,—from civil, military, or naval renown,—from beauty, strength, or nobleness of form,—must be temporary; but that which is founded on attachment to God, to his law, and to the Saviour, will abide for ever.

80. *Let my heart be sound,* etc. Heb., *Be perfect.* See Notes on Job i. 1. The Septuagint here is *immaculate,* ἄμωμος. So the Latin Vulgate. It is the expression of a desire that the heart might be pure; that there might be no improper attachment for other objects; that there might be no defect of love to God. ¶ *That I be not ashamed.* See Notes on ver. 6. A man has no occasion to be ashamed of a pure heart; and that which can

CAPH.

81 My soul fainteth *o* for thy salvation; *but* I hope in thy word.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; *yet* do I not forget thy statutes.

84 How many *are* the days of thy servant? when *p* wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

o Ps. lxxxiv. 2. *p* 2 Thess. i. 6; Rev. vi. 10.

alone keep us from being ultimately ashamed is sincerity, uprightness, and purity in the service of God.

81. *My soul fainteth for thy salvation.* The new division of the psalm, which begins here, is indicated by the Hebrew letter *Caph*, equivalent to *k* or *c* (hard). The word here rendered *fainteth* is the same that in Ps. lxxiii. 26 is translated *faileth:* "My flesh and my heart *faileth.*" The idea is, that his strength gave way; he had such an intense *desire* for salvation that he became weak and powerless. Any strong emotion *may* thus prostrate us; and the love of God—the desire of his favour—the longing for heaven—may be so intense as to produce this result. ¶ *I hope in thy word.* I trust in thy promises, and am sustained. My powers, which would otherwise wholly fail, are upheld *by* thy word, and on that I rely. See ver. 74.

82. *Mine eyes fail for thy word.* The same word in Hebrew as in the previous verse and in Ps. lxxiii. 26. The idea here is that of looking out for a thing—of "*straining* the eyes"—so that their power becomes exhausted. The language expresses a longing desire—a waiting—an intense wish—for a thing, as when we look for a ship long expected, or for a friend long absent, or for help when in danger. Such a desire the psalmist had for the word of God; for Divine truth. ¶ *Saying, When wilt thou comfort me?* How long shall I be compelled to wait for comfort? How often in the Psalms do the expressions occur, "*When,*" and "*How long!*" How often in the life of the believer now are similar expressions appropriate! God often seems greatly to try the faith and patience of his people by mere *delay;* and the strength of faith and the power of religion are shown in such circumstances by persevering faith in the Divine promises, even when there seems to be no evidence that he will interpose.

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.* Bottles in the East were commonly made of skins. See Notes on Matt. ix. 17. Such "bottles," hanging in tents where the smoke had little opportunity to escape, would, of course, become dark and dingy, and would thus be emblems of distress, discomfort, and sorrow. The meaning here is, that, by affliction and sorrow, the psalmist had been reduced to a state which would be well represented by such a bottle. A somewhat similar idea occurs in Ps. xxii. 15: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd." See Notes on that place. ¶ Yet *do I not forget thy statutes.* Comp. Notes on ver. 51. Though thus deeply afflicted, though without comfort or peace, yet I do, I will, maintain allegiance to thee and thy law. The doctrine is that distress, poverty, sorrow, penury, and rags—the most abject circumstances of life—will not turn away a true child of God from obeying and serving him. True religion will abide all these tests. Lazarus from the deepest poverty—from beggary—from undressed sores—went up to Abraham's bosom.

84. *How many* are *the days of thy servant?* I cannot hope to live long. I am sinking under my burdens. If I am, therefore, to see the accomplishment of my desires—my deliverance from my enemies and my troubles—it must be soon. This is not a desire to be told how long he was to live, as if it were an object of desire to know

85 The proud have digged [q] pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

86 All [r] thy commandments *are* [1] faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

88 Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

LAMED.

89 For [s] ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

[q] Ps. xxxv. 7. [r] ver. 138.

[1] *faithfulness.* [s] Matt. xxiv. 34, 35.

this, but it is a method of saying that he could not live long under these circumstances, and therefore he offered this earnest prayer that God would interpose and save him *soon.* ¶ *When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?* How long shall this be delayed? I look for this; I expect it; I rely on thy promise that it shall be done; but if done so that *I* shall see it, it must soon be done, for I shall soon sink into the grave. It is a prayer that God would come and do quickly what he felt assured he would do, in delivering him from his foes.

85. *The proud.* Those in high life, or of exalted rank. See Notes on ver. 51. ¶ *Have digged pits for me.* See Notes on Ps. vii. 15. Comp. Ps. xxxv. 7; lvii. 6; xciv. 13. ¶ *Which* are *not after thy law.* The word *which* here refers not to the *pits,* but to the *proud.* They who have done this are men who do not regard thy commands; men who are open and public offenders. It is that class of men with whom I have to contend—men who set at defiance all the laws of God; men high in rank, who wield great power, and who have no regard to the law of God in their conduct. Even they have sought my destruction in the meanest way possible—by covert arts, by underhanded means, by digging pits, as they would for wild beasts.

86. *All thy commandments* are *faithful.* Marg., *faithfulness.* The idea in the Hebrew is that they are worthy to be relied on. They are founded in truth, and they should secure our confidence. ¶ *They persecute me wrongfully,* etc. Heb., a *lie,* or *falsehood.* That is, There is a *lie* or *falsehood* at the foundation of their persecutions. Those persecutions are not based on any just views of what I am, or of the treatment which I ought to receive at the hand of my fellow-men. They charge on me things which are not true, and they act accordingly. See Notes on ver. 78.

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth.* The word which is here translated *consumed* is the same which is used in ver. 81, and there rendered *fainteth.* See Notes on that verse. The idea is, that their persecutions had been so severe, and so long continued, that his strength was almost exhausted; he was ready to faint and to die. ¶ *But I forsook not thy precepts.* I still adhered to thee, even in the extremity of my suffering. The effect of persecution was not to drive me from thee, or to lead me to abandon thee. See Notes on vers. 61, 69.

88. *Quicken me.* Cause me to live; revive me. See Notes on Ps. lxxi. 20; Eph. ii. 1. Comp. Ps. lxxx. 18; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Pet. iii. 18; John vi. 63. ¶ *After thy loving-kindness.* Thy mercy; thy grace; thy compassion. That is, Let the measure of the grace given to me be thine own benevolent nature, and not my deserts. That is all I ask; that is all I could desire. ¶ *So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.* Which proceeds out of thy mouth. His hope of being able to keep it was founded on the grace and mercy which he besought God to bestow upon him.

89. *For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.* This commences a

90 Thy faithfulness *is* [1] unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it [2] abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: *t* for all *are* thy servants.

[1] *to generation and generation,* Ps. lxxxix. 1.

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

[2] *standeth.* *t* Jer. xxxiii. 25.

new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Lamed,* or *l.* On the meaning of the passage, see Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 2. The word rendered *settled* means properly *to set, to put, to place;* and then, to stand, to cause to stand, to set up, as a column, Gen. xxxv. 20; an altar, Gen. xxxiii. 20; a monument, 1 Sam. xv. 12. The meaning here is, that the word—the law—the promise—of God was made firm, established, stable, in heaven; and would be so for ever and ever. What God had ordained as law would always remain law; what he had affirmed would always remain true; what he had promised would be sure for ever.

90. *Thy faithfulness.* The accomplishment of thy promises. ¶ Is *unto all generations.* Marg., to *generation and generation.* From one generation to another. The generations of men change and pass away, but thy promises do not change. They are as applicable to one generation as to another; they meet every generation alike. The people of no one age can lay any exclusive claim to them, or feel that they were made only for them. They are as universal—as much adapted to the new generations that come upon the earth—as the light of the sun, everenduring, is; or as the fountains and streams, which flow from age to age. ¶ *Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.* Marg., *Standeth.* It is firm. The earth thus established or made firm, is an illustration of thy faithfulness, and of the stability and permanence of thy promises. It is the same from generation to generation, with its rivers, streams, and fountains; with its fruits and flowers; with its balmy air and its sweet prospects; with its riches of gold and silver; with its pearls and diamonds; with its treasures of land and ocean. So is the word of God—so are the gracious promises which he has addressed to men—the same in every age.

91. *They continue this day according to thine ordinances.* According to thy *judgments* (Heb.); that is, thy commands. They *stand* (Heb.) as thou hast appointed; they are what thou didst design them to be. The original purpose in their creation is carried out, and they thus furnish an illustration of the stability of thy government and the permanency of thy law. ¶ *For all* are *thy servants.* All worlds obey thy commands; all are under thy control. They *show* that they are thy servants by the conformity of their movements to the laws which thou hast impressed on them.

92. *Unless thy law* had been *my delights.* See Notes on vers. 16, 24. Unless I had had pleasure in thy law, thy word, thy truth; unless I had derived support and consolation in that. ¶ *I should then have perished in mine affliction.* I should have sunk under my burden. I should not have been able to hold up under the weight of sorrow and trial. How often the people of God can say this! How often may each one in the course of his life say this! "I should have sunk a thousand times," said a most excellent, but much afflicted, man to me, "if it had not been for one declaration in the word of God, —'The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'"

93. *I will never forget thy precepts.* Thy laws; thy truth. I will

94 I *am* thine, save [u] me: for I have sought thy precepts.
95 The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.
96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

[u] Zeph. iii. 17.

bear them in mind for ever. To all eternity they shall be the object of my meditation. ¶ *For with them thou hast quickened me.* By them thou hast given me life, spiritual life. Comp. Notes on James i. 18. This is stated as a reason why he would never suffer the truth of God to pass out of his mind. By that truth he had been made really to live. He had been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. He saw before him now, as the result of that, an endless career of blessedness. How *could* he ever forget that which had wrought such a change in his character and condition; which had inspired such hopes; which had opened before him such an immortal career of glory!

94. *I* am *thine.* All that he had, and was, belonged to God. This is an expression of a *fact,* and of a *purpose:*—a *fact* about which he had no doubt; a *purpose* ever to be the Lord's. This is indicative of the real state of feeling in the heart of a pious man. He feels that he *is* the Lord's; he has no other desire than to *be* his for ever. ¶ *Save me.* Deliver me from my enemies; from sin; from hell. As he *belonged* to God, he prayed that God would save and preserve his own. ¶ *For I have sought thy precepts.* I feel assured or confident that this has been the aim and purpose of my life. On this ground I plead that thou wilt keep and preserve me. A man who feels assured that he is a friend of God has a *right* to appeal to him for protection, and he will not appeal to him in vain.

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.* That is, they have lain in wait; or, they have laid a plan. They are watching the opportunity to do it. ¶ But *I will consider thy testimonies.* I will think of them; I will adhere to them; I will find my support in them; I will not be driven from my adhesion to them by an apprehension of what man can do to me.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection.* The word which is here rendered *perfection*—תִּכְלָה, *tichlah*—occurs only in this place; but a similar word from the same root—תַּכְלִית, *tachlith*—occurs in the following places:—in Neh. iii. 21, and Job xxvi. 10, rendered *end;* in Job xi. 7, xxviii. 3, rendered *perfection;* and in Ps. cxxxix. 22, rendered *perfect.* It means properly *completion, perfection;* or, as others suppose, *hope, confidence.* It is rendered, in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, *consummation.* Luther renders it, "of all things." It is proper here to apply it to character; to perfect virtue, or to claims to perfect virtue,—either in one's-self or in others. The word rendered *end* here refers not to the fact of its existence, or to its duration, but to a limit or boundary as to its extent. To all claims to perfection made by man, he had seen an end or limit. He had examined all which claimed to be perfect; he had found it defective; he had so surveyed and examined the matter, as to be able to say that there could be no claim to perfection which would prove good. All claim to perfection on the part of man must be abandoned for ever. ¶ But *thy commandment* is *exceeding broad.* The word *but* is not in the original, and enfeebles the sense. The idea is, that the law of God, as he now saw it, was of such a nature—was so "*broad*"—as to demonstrate that there *could* be no just claim to perfection among men. All claims to perfection had arisen from the fact

MEM.

97 O how love I thy law! it *is* [v] my meditation all the day.

98 Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for [1] they *are* ever with me.

99 I [w] have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

[v] Ps. i. 2. [1] *it* is. [w] Deut. iv. 6, 8; 2 Tim. iii. 15.

that the law was *not* properly understood, that its true nature was not seen. Men thought that they were perfect, but it was because they had no just view of the extent and the spirituality of the law of God. They set up an imperfect standard; and when they became conformed to that standard, as they might do, they imagined themselves to be perfect; but when their conduct was compared with a higher and more just standard—the law of God—it could not but be seen that they were imperfect men. That law had claims which they had not met, and never would meet, in this life. It is very easy to flatter ourselves that we are perfect, if we make our own *standard* of character; it is not possible for man to set up a claim to perfection, if he measures himself by the standard of God's word; and all the claims of men to perfection are made simply because they do not properly understand what the law of God requires. Comp. Notes on Job ix. 20.

97. *O how love I thy law!* This commences a new division of the Psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Mem—m*. The expression here, "O how love I thy law," implies *intense* love,—as if a man were astonished at the fervour of his own emotion. His love was so ardent that it was amazing and wonderful to himself;—perhaps wonderful that he, a sinner, should love the law of God at all; wonderful that he should ever have been brought *so* to love a law which condemned himself. Any man who reflects on what his feelings are by nature in regard to religion, will be filled with wonder that he loves it at all; all who are truly religious ought to be so filled with love to it, that it will be difficult for them to find words to express the intensity of their affection. ¶ *It is my meditation all the day.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2.

98. *Thou, through thy commandments.* By the teaching and power of thy law. ¶ *Hast made me wiser than mine enemies.* I have a better understanding of thee, of thy law, of the duties of this life, and in regard to the life to come, than my enemies have,—not because I am naturally better, or because I have higher endowments by nature, but because *thou* hast made me wiser than they are. The rendering of this first clause of the verse now most approved by interpreters is, "Thy commandments make me more wise than my enemies are," though this requires a singular verb to be construed with a plural noun (Professor Alexander). So De Wette renders it. ¶ *For they* are *ever with me.* Marg., as in Heb., *it is ever with me.* The reference is to the law or commandments of God. The meaning is, that that law was never out of his mind; that he was constantly thinking about it; and that it unfolded such wisdom to him as to make him superior to all his foes;—to give him a better understanding of life, its design, its duties, and its obligations, than his enemies had. The best instructor in true wisdom is the revealed word of God,—the Bible.

99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers.* Referring perhaps to those who had given him instruction in early life. By constant meditation on the law of God, he had, in the progress of years, advanced to a point beyond that to which they had arrived. He had improved upon their suggestions and instructions, until he had surpassed them in knowledge.

100 I understand more than the ancients; [x] because I keep thy precepts.

101 I have refrained [y] my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

[x] Job xxxii. 7—9. [y] Prov. i. 15.

His *design* in saying this was to set forth the excellency and the fulness of the law of God, and to show how the study of it was fitted to enlarge the understanding. In early life the wisdom of teachers seems to be far beyond anything that we can hope to reach; yet a few years of study and meditation may place us far beyond them. What those teachers *seemed* to be to us, however, when we were young, may serve ever onward as a means of comparison when we wish to speak of the greatness of human attainments. So the psalmist says that he had now reached a point which seemed to him in early life to be wonderful, and to be beyond what he had then hoped ever to attain. He had now reached that point; he had gone beyond it. ¶ *For thy testimonies* are *my meditation.* Comp. Ps. i. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 15. All this knowledge he had obtained by meditation on the law of God; by the study of Divine truth. The effect of that constant study was seen in the knowledge which he now possessed, and which seemed to surprise even himself as compared with the brightest anticipations of his early years.

100. *I understand more than the ancients.* Heb., The old men. It does not refer, as the word *ancients* does with us, to the men of former times, but to aged men. They have treasured up wisdom. They have had the advantage of experience, of study, and of observation. They, therefore, like teachers, become a standard by which we measure our own attainments, as the boy hardly hopes to gain that amount of knowledge which he observes in men who are venerable in years, and who are remarkable for their acquirements. Comp. Job xii. 12: "With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding." Job xxxii. 7: "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Comp. 1 Kings iv. 30, 31. Yet the psalmist says that he *had* reached this point, and had even gone *beyond* what he had once thought he could never attain. ¶ *Because I keep thy precepts.* It is all the result of an honest endeavour to do right; to observe law; to keep the commands of God. Obedience to the law of God will do more than any mere human teaching to make a man truly wise.

101. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way.* I have walked in the path which thy law marks out. I have avoided the way of wickedness, and have not yielded to the seductions of a sinful life. ¶ *That I might keep thy word.* I have avoided all those allurements which would turn me from obedience, and which would prevent a right observance of thy commands. This indicates a *purpose* and a *desire* to keep the law of God, and shows the method which he adopted in order to do this. That method was to guard against everything which would turn him from obedience; it was, to make obedience to the law of God the great aim of the life.

102. *I have not departed from thy judgments.* Thy law; thy commands. This cannot mean that he had *never* done this, but that as a great rule of life he had not done it. The character and aim of his life had been obedience, not disobedience. A man may honestly say this, though he may be conscious of much imperfection, and may feel that he has not *perfectly* carried out such an aim and purpose. No one can be a truly pious man, or have evidence of personal religion, who cannot say in sincerity that he has "not departed" in this sense, "from

103 How sweet [z] are thy words unto my [1] taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate [a] every false way.

[z] Job xxiii. 12; Ps. xix. 10. [1] *palate.*

NUN.

105 Thy word *is* a [2] lamp [b] unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

106 I have sworn, [c] and I will

[a] Prov. viii. 13. [2] Or, *candle.*
[b] Prov. vi. 23. [c] Neh. x. 29.

the judgments" (the commands) of God; who cannot look back on his life and say that his course—his aim—his *character*—since he became a professor of religion—*has* been one of obedience to God. Comp. 1 John iii. 7-9. ¶ *For thou hast taught me.* Not to himself was this to be traced, but to God; not to any wisdom of his own, but to that which was given him from on high.

103. *How sweet are thy words unto my taste,* etc. Marg., as in Heb., *palate.* The reference is to the taste, perhaps because the sense of taste was supposed to reside in the palate. The Hebrew word *may* include also the whole of the inside of the mouth. The word rendered *sweet* does not occur elsewhere. It properly means *to be smooth,* and hence is applied to kind or agreeable words. On the sentiment here, see Notes on Ps. xix. 10.

104. *Through thy precepts I get understanding.* A true understanding; a correct view of things; a knowledge of thee, of myself, of the human character, of the destiny of man, of the way of salvation—the best, and the only essential knowledge for man. This knowledge the psalmist obtained from the "precepts" of God; that is, *all* that God had communicated by revelation. This passage expresses in few words what had been said more at length in vers. 98-100. ¶ *Therefore I hate every false way.* I see that which is right and true, and I pursue it. In proportion as I have a just knowledge of truth and duty, I hate that which is false and evil.

105. *Thy word* is *a lamp unto my feet.* This begins a new portion of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Nun,* equivalent to our *n.* The margin here is *candle.* The Hebrew word means a light, lamp, candle. The idea is, that the word of God is like a torch or lamp to a man in a dark night. It shows him the way; it prevents his stumbling over obstacles, or falling down precipices, or wandering off into paths which would lead into danger, or would turn him away altogether from the path to life. Comp. Notes on 2 Pet. i. 19. ¶ *And a light unto my path.* The same idea substantially is presented here. It is a light which shines on the road that a man treads, so that he may *see* the path, and that he may see any danger which may be *in* his path. The expression is very beautiful, and is full of instruction. He who makes the word of God his guide, and marks its teachings, is *in* the right way. He will clearly see the path. He will be able to mark the road in which he ought to go, and to avoid all those by-paths which would lead him astray. He will see *where* those by-roads turn off from the main path,—often at a very small angle, and so that there seems to be no divergence. He will see any obstruction which may lie in his path; any declivity or precipice which may be near, and down which, in a dark night, one might fall. Man *needs* such a guide, and the Bible *is* such a guide. Comp. Notes on ver. 9.

106. *I have sworn.* I have solemnly purposed; I have given to this purpose the solemnity and sanction of an oath. That is, I have called God to witness; I have formed the purpose in his presence, and with the consciousness that his eye is upon me. So all who make a profession of religion solemnly vow or swear. They do it in the house of God; they do it

perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the [d] freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul *is* continually in [e] my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

[d] Heb. xiii. 15.

[e] Job xiii. 14.

in the presence of the Discerner of hearts; they do it at the communion table; they do it at the family altar; they do it in the closet, when alone with God. ¶ *And I will perform* it. Heb., I will establish it, or make it to stand. It shall not be a mere purpose. It shall be accomplished. This also is the resolution of all who make a true profession of religion. It is their intention—their solemn determination—to carry out that vow to its full accomplishment, always, and in every place, while life lasts, and for ever. A man who makes a profession of religion, intending *not* to carry out what is fairly implied in such a profession, is a hypocrite. Unless there is a solemn purpose to keep the law of God, and always to keep it,—to do what is fairly implied in a profession of religion, and always to do it,—to defend the truth according to his best means of knowing it, and always to defend it,—he cannot possibly be a sincere friend of God; he cannot be truly a religious man. He cannot be loyal to his country who *designs* to violate any one of its just laws; he cannot be an obedient child who *intends* to disobey the laws of a parent. ¶ *That I will keep thy righteous judgments.* Not implying that there are any of the judgments of God which are *not* righteous, but meaning to characterize all his judgments or laws *as* righteous.

107. *I am afflicted very much.* The form of the affliction is not mentioned. There are frequent allusions in the psalm to the fact that the author was and had been afflicted—as, in fact, must be the case in the life of every good man. Comp. vers. 71, 75. If David was the author of the psalm, we know that there were numerous occasions in his life when this language would be appropriate. As designed for the people of God at all times, it was important that there should be these allusions to affliction. ¶ *Quicken me,* etc. Make me live; give me life and vigour, that I may bear up under my trials. See Notes on ver. 25.

108. *Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth.* On the meaning of the word here rendered *free-will,* see Notes on Ps. cx. 3. It conveys the idea that there is no constraint or compulsion; that the offering is a prompting of the heart. The offering might be that of flour, or grain, or fruits, or property of any kind, as devoted to God; or it might be, as here, an offering of the lips, expressed in prayer and praise. Either of them might be acceptable to God; —their being accepted in either case would depend on the good pleasure of God, and hence the psalmist prays that his offering *might* be thus acceptable. Comp. Heb. xiii. 15. ¶ *And teach me thy judgments.* Thy commands; thy laws. See Notes on ver. 12.

109. *My soul* is *continually in my hand.* The Septuagint renders this, "My soul is always in *thy* hands," but the Hebrew will not admit of this construction. The idea in the original is that his soul—his life—was always in jeopardy. The expression seems to be proverbial. Anything taken in the hand is liable to be rudely snatched away. Thus a casket of jewels, or a purse of gold in the hand, may at any moment be seized by robbers. See Notes on Job xiii. 14. Comp. 1 Sam. xix. 5; Judges xii. 3. The meaning here is, that his life was constantly in danger. ¶ *Yet*

110 The wicked have laid a snare [f] for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they *are* the rejoicing [g] of my heart.

[f] Prov. i. 11, 12. [g] Jer. xv. 16.

112 I have inclined [h] mine heart to [1] perform thy statutes alway, *even unto* the end.

SAMECH.

113 I hate *vain* [k] thoughts: but thy law do I love.

[h] 2 Chron. xix. 3. [1] *do.*
[i] Rev. ii. 10. [k] Jer. iv. 14.

do I not forget thy law. Notwithstanding the danger to which I am exposed, and the care necessary to defend my life, I do not allow my mind to be turned from meditating on thy law, nor do I suffer any danger to deter me from obeying it. Comp. Notes on ver. 61.

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me.* As men do to take wild beasts or birds. See Notes on ver. 85. Comp. Notes on Job xviii. 8, 10; Ps. ix. 15; lxix. 22. See also vers. 61, 69. ¶ *Yet I erred not from thy precepts.* Notwithstanding the danger to which I was exposed, I maintained a steadfast adherence to thy commandments. I was not deterred from obeying them by any peril which beset me.

111. *Thy testimonies.* Thy law; thy revealed will;—the revelation which thou hast given considered as thy solemn *testimony* as to what is true and right. ¶ *Have I taken as an heritage for ever.* As my inheritance; as my property; as that which I consider to be of real and permanent value. The Hebrew word here used —נָחַל, *nahhal*—means to receive as a possession; to acquire; to possess as wealth; and then, to inherit. It is usually applied to the possession of the promised land as an inheritance. Here it means that the law of God was to him *as* such a possession. He regarded it as one does a rich inheritance. He chose it as his portion above all things else. ¶ *For they* are *the rejoicing of my heart.* My happiness is in them. I find constant comfort in them. See vers. 77, 92. Comp. Notes on Ps. i. 2.

112. *I have inclined mine heart.* The Hebrew word means properly to stretch out; to extend—as the hand. Ex. viii. 6, 17. Then it means to incline, to bow, to depress. Here the idea is, that he had *given* that *direction* to the inclinations of his heart; he had resolved or purposed. He refers to an act of choice on his part, meaning that he had preferred this course, or that he had made this a solemn intention. Though every right inclination of the human heart is to be traced to the Divine agency, yet it is also true that man is active in religion,—or that his own mind resolves, chooses, and prefers,—and that true religion *is* the actual *choice* or *preference* of all who serve God aright. See Notes on ver. 59. ¶ *To perform thy statutes alway.* Marg., as in Heb., *to do.* He meant to do the will of God. He intended to do this constantly; even for ever. No man can be a truly pious man who has any disposition, or any purpose, *ever* to turn away from the service of God. ¶ Even unto *the end.* See ver. 33. To the end of life; to the end of all things.

113. *I hate* vain *thoughts.* This commences a new portion of the psalm, distinguished by the Hebrew letter *Samech*, answering to our *s*. The word rendered "vain thoughts" occurs only in this place. It is rendered by the Septuagint, παρανόμους —transgressors. So the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it *die Flattergeister*, the frivolous-minded. The word means *divided;* a man of a *divided mind;* a man who has no sure faith in regard to Divine things, but is driven hither and thither; a sceptic; a doubter. Comp. James i. 8. Thus it refers not to his own thoughts primarily, as being "vain" or worthless, but to a state of mind or heart

114 Thou [l] *art* my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

115 Depart [m] from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed [n] of my hope.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

[l] Ps. xxxii. 7. [m] Ps. cxxxix. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 33.

[n] Rom. v. 5.

in general, where there is no firmness, no stability, no settled view:—a state of mind wavering, doubtful, sceptical, in regard to religion. What is implied here in reference to what he *loved*,—by stating (in the way of contrast) what he "hated,"—would be a mind which was settled in its convictions of truth, and firm in its adherence to truth; a mind which was steadfast in religion, and not vacillating, sceptical, or uncertain on the subject. This denotes that the psalmist sought such a state of mind for himself, and that he valued it in others. ¶ *But thy law do I love.* I have no "divided" or unsettled feelings in regard to that. I am conscious of a firm attachment to it. This thought he has repeatedly expressed in the psalm.

114. *Thou* art *my hiding place.* See Notes on Ps. xxxii. 7, where the same expression occurs. ¶ *And my shield.* See Notes on Ps. v. 12; lxxxiv. 11. ¶ *I hope in thy word.* See vers. 74, 81.

115. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers.* Workers of iniquity; bad men. See Notes on Ps. vi. 8. This indicates a determined purpose that nothing should deter or allure him from the service of God. A man who wishes to serve God, and lead a religious life, *must* separate himself from the society, as such, of unprincipled men. ¶ *For I will keep the commandments of my God.* This is my fixed resolution. It may be remarked here (1) that bad men *will* turn away from the society of one who has formed such a resolution, and who carries it out; (2) the resolution is a necessary one to be formed and executed, if a man will serve God; (3) the formation and execution of such a purpose, is the best way to get rid of the society of bad men.

116. *Uphold me.* Sustain me in the trials and the temptations of life. Help me to bear afflictions without sinking under them; to meet temptations without yielding to them; to encounter opposition from the enemies of religion without being overcome. ¶ *According unto thy word.* (1) According to the requirements of thy word,—that I may be conformed to them; (2) according to the promises of thy word,—that they may be verified in me. ¶ *That I may live.* That my life may not be cut off by my foes, and that I may not sink under my burdens. ¶ *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.* The meaning of this is, Let not my hope prove to be delusive and vain; let it not be seen at last that it is worthless, or that religion has no power to accomplish what it promises. See Notes on Ps. vi. 10; xxv. 2, 3; xxxi. 1. The phrase does not mean, as it would seem to signify, Let me not blush, or be unwilling to acknowledge my hope, or to profess that I am a friend of God. That *would be*, indeed, a proper prayer, but it is not the prayer here.

117. *Hold thou me up.* Keep me from falling in the trials and temptations of life. The Hebrew word means to prop, uphold, support. The Septuagint is, "Aid me." ¶ *And I shall be safe.* And I shall be *saved;* or, that I may be *saved.* It is an acknowledgment of entire dependence on God for salvation—temporal and eternal. ¶ *And I will have respect,* etc. I will *look* to thy statutes; I will have them always in my eye. Comp. Notes on ver. 6.

118 Thou hast trodden [o] down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit *is* [p] falsehood.

119 Thou [1] puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross: [q]

o Mal. iv. 3. p 1 John ii. 21.
1 *causest to cease.*

therefore I love thy testimonies.

120 My flesh trembleth [r] for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

AIN.

121 I have done judgment and

q Ez. xxii. 18. r Hab. iii. 16.

118. *Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes.* Comp. Notes on ver. 21. Rather, "Thou hast made light of," or "thou despisest." The Hebrew word means properly to suspend in a balance; to weigh. Then it means to lift up lightly or easily; and then, to make light of; to contemn; to regard anything as *light*. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, *Thou dost despise*. That is, God regards them as of no account; as a light substance of no value; as chaff which the wind carries away. Comp. Job xxi. 18; Ps. i. 4; xxxv. 5; Isa. xvii. 13. ¶ *For their deceit* is *falsehood*. This *seems* to be a truism—for deceit must imply falsehood. In the original this is an emphatic way of declaring the whole thing to be false, as the Hebrew language often expresses emphasis by mere repetition,—thus "*pits, pits,*" meaning *many pits*. The psalmist *first* characterizes their conduct as *deceitful*—as that which cannot be relied on—as that which must fail in the end; he then speaks of this *system* on which they acted as altogether a "*lie*"—as that which is utterly "false;"—thus giving, as it were, *a double emphasis* to the statement, and showing how *utterly* delusive and vain it must be.

119. *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth.* Marg., *causest to cease.* Literally: "Dross—thou makest all the wicked of the earth to cease." They are seen by the psalmist as dross, and then he says that God had treated them as such. ¶ Like *dross*. The *scoriæ* of metals, or of a furnace. This dross is cast out as of no value. So the wicked are regarded by God. ¶ *Therefore I love thy testimonies.* I love a law which condemns sin. I love a government which ferrets out and punishes the guilty. This is a leading object with all just governments; and this we approve in all governments. As the Divine government makes this an object, and as it will accomplish this more perfectly than any other administration, so it is more worthy of confidence than any other. As it is the only government that does this perfectly, so it is the only one that is worthy of unlimited confidence.

120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.* I stand in awe of thee. I shudder at the consciousness of thy presence. See Hab. iii. 16; Heb. xii. 21; Joel ii. 10; Nah. i. 5. There is nothing unaccountable in this. Any man would tremble, should God manifest himself to him as he might do; and it is possible that the *mind* may have such an overpowering sense of the presence and majesty of God, that the *body* shall be agitated, lose its strength, and with the deepest alarm fall to the earth. Comp. Dan. x. 8; Rev. i. 17. No man could meet one of the departed dead, or a good angel, without this fear; how much less could he meet God! ¶ *And I am afraid of thy judgments.* Of thy laws or commands. My mind is filled with awe at the strictness, the spirituality, the severity of thy law. Reverence—awe—is one of the essential elements of all true religion.

121. *I have done judgment and justice.* This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Ain*—a letter which cannot well be represented in the English alphabet, as there is, in fact, no letter in our language exactly cor-

justice: leave [s] me not to mine oppressors.

122 Be surety [t] for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

124 Deal [u] with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125 I [v] *am* thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

s Ps. xxxvii. 32, 33. *t* Heb. vii. 22. *u* Ps. ciii. 10. *v* Ps. cxvi. 16.

responding with it. It would be best represented probably by what are called "*breathings*" in Greek. The meaning of the first part of this verse is, "I have led a righteous and upright life." It is equivalent to saying that he had kept the law of God, or had made that the rule of his conduct. ¶ *Leave me not to mine oppressors.* To the men who would do me wrong; who seek my hurt. He urged this on the ground that he had been obedient to the Divine law, and might, therefore, with propriety, make this request, or might claim the Divine protection. Man has no merit of his own, and no claim on God; but when he is his true friend, it is not improper to expect that he will interpose in his behalf; nor is it improper to present this in the form of a prayer. Our loving God, and serving him, though it *is* done imperfectly, is, in fact, a reason why he should and will interpose in our behalf.

122. *Be surety for thy servant for good.* On the meaning of the word here rendered "be surety," see Notes on Job xvii. 3, and Isa. xxxviii. 14, in both which places the same Hebrew word occurs: In Isaiah it is rendered "*undertake* for me." The word means, properly, *to mix, to mingle;* hence, to braid, to interweave; then, to exchange, to barter. Then it means to mix or intermingle *interests;* to unite ourselves with others so that their interests come to be our own; and hence, to take one under our protection, to become answerable for, to be a surety for:—as, when one endorses a note for another, he *mingles* his own interest, reputation, and means with his. So Christ becomes the security or surety—ἔγγυος—of his people, Heb. vii. 22. The prayer here is, that God would, so to speak, mix or mingle his cause and that of the psalmist together, and that he would then protect the common cause as his own; or, that he would become a *pledge* or *surety* for the safety of the psalmist. This now, through the Mediator, we have a right to ask at the hand of God; and when God makes our cause his own, we must be safe. ¶ *Let not the proud oppress me.* See Notes on ver. 51. Let them not triumph over me, and crush me.

123. *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.* See Notes on vers. 81, 82. ¶ *And for the word of thy righteousness.* Thy righteous word,—that it may be made known to me, and that I may see its beauty and enjoy it.

124. *Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.* Not according to justice—for, sinners as we are, we can never urge that as a plea before God. No man who knows himself *could* ask of God to deal with him according to the strict and stern principles of justice. But we may ask him to deal with us according to mercy—for mercy is our only plea, and the mercy of God—vast and boundless—constitutes such a ground of appeal as we need. No man can have any other; no man need desire any other. ¶ *And teach me thy statutes.* See Notes on ver. 12. Show thy mercy to me in teaching me thy law.

125. *I* am *thy servant.* See Notes on Ps. cxvi. 16. ¶ *Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.* Since I am thy servant, instruct me in the knowledge of thy

126 *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work; *for* they have made void thy law.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above *w* gold, yea, above fine gold.

128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way.

w Ps. xix. 10; Prov. viii. 11.

will. As I desire to obey thee, show me what will be acceptable obedience, or what thou dost require in order to acceptable service. This is a prayer of piety. A man who sincerely desires to obey God will make it a first point to ascertain what is his will, or what will constitute true obedience.

126. It is *time for* thee, LORD, *to work*. Literally, "Time to do for Jehovah;" and the construction might be either that it is time to do [something] for Jehovah; or, that it is time for Jehovah himself to do [something]. The direct address to the Lord in the latter part of the sentence would seem, however, to show that the latter is the true interpretation:—to wit, that since men make void the law of God, it is time for *him* to work, that is, to interpose by his power and restrain them; to bring them to repentance; to assert his own authority; to vindicate his cause. Thus understood, it is an appropriate prayer to be used when iniquity abounds, and when some peculiar form of sin has an ascendancy among a people. The other interpretation, however, "It is time [for us] to do [something], since men make void thy law," suggests a truth of great importance. Then is the time when the people of God should arouse themselves to efforts to stay the tide of wickedness, and to secure the ascendancy of religion, of virtue, and of law. ¶ For *they have made void thy law*. They have broken it. They have set it at defiance. They regard and treat it as if it had no claim to obedience; as if it were a thing of nought. This the psalmist urges as a reason for the putting forth of power to arrest the evil; to bring men to repentance; to secure the salvation of souls. By all the evil done when the law of God is set at nought, by all the desirableness that the law should be obeyed, by all the danger to the souls of men from its violation, this prayer may now and at all times be offered, and that with earnestness. Comp. ver. 136.

127. *Therefore I love thy commandments*, etc. The more men break them (ver. 126), the more I see their value; the more precious they are to me. The fact that they make thy law void, and that evil consequences result from their conduct, only impresses my mind the more with a sense of the value of the law, and makes my heart cling to it the more. There is almost nothing that will so impress upon our minds the importance of *law* as the sight of the effects which follow when it is disregarded. ¶ *Above gold*, etc. See Notes on ver. 72. Comp. Ps. xix. 10.

128. *Therefore I esteem all* thy *precepts* concerning *all* things to be *right*. Literally, "Therefore all the commandments of all I regard as right." The idea seems to be, that he regarded as right and just all the commandments of God pertaining to *every* thing and *every* person; all, considered in every way; all, wherever the law extended, and whomsoever it embraced; all the law pertaining to duty towards God and towards man. He saw in the *violation* of the laws of God (ver. 126) a reason for approving *all* law; all that would restrain men from sin, and that would bind them to duty and to virtue. The effect had been to lead him to reflect on the worth of law *as* law, and he had come to the conclusion that *all* the laws of God were to be approved and loved, inasmuch as they would, in their observance, prevent the wrongs and sorrows which he saw to be consequent on their violation. ¶ And *I hate every false way*. Every course

PE.

129 Thy testimonies *are* [z] wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; [y] it [z] giveth understanding unto the simple.

x ver. 18; Isa. xxv. 1. *y* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, [1] as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

z Prov. i. 4; ix. 4—6.

[1] *according to the custom toward.*

of life not based on truth, or on a right view of things. All just law is based on a perception of what is *true;* on the reality of things; on what is required in the nature of the case; on what will tend to promote the best interests of society. Comp. Notes on ver. 104.

129. *Thy testimonies* are *wonderful.* This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Pe*, corresponding to our *p*. The meaning of the expression here is, that the laws of God—the revelations of his will—are adapted to fill the mind with wonder. The mind is awed by their wisdom; their comprehensiveness; their extent; their spirituality; their benevolence:—by the fact that laws are framed, so perfectly adapted to the end; so well fitted to secure order, and to promote happiness. ¶ *Therefore doth my soul keep them.* Because they are so surpassingly wise and benevolent; because they are so manifestly the work of wisdom and goodness.

130. *The entrance of thy words giveth light.* The Septuagint translates this, "the manifestation (or declaration)—ἡ δήλωσις—of thy words enlightens." So the Vulgate. Luther renders it, "When thy word is revealed, so it delivers us, and makes the simple wise." De Wette, "The opening [revelation] of thy word," etc. The Hebrew word—פֶּתַח, *paithahh*—means an *opening* or *entrance*—as of a gate, Josh. xx. 4; Judges ix. 35; and then *a door,* as of a tent or the temple, Gen. xviii. 1; 1 Kings vi. 8; or the gate of a city, Isa. iii. 26; and then it means opening, insight, instruction. The word as here used seems to denote the opening or unfolding of the word of God; the revelation of that word to the mind. A door is open so that we enter into a house; a gate, so that we enter into a city; and thus the meaning of the word of God is *opened* to us, so that we may, as it were, enter in and see its beauty. The language does not, therefore, denote the entrance of that word *into* the mind, but, its being made open *to us* so that we may perceive its beauty, or may ourselves "enter" into its meaning, its mysteries, and its beauties. ¶ *It giveth understanding unto the simple.* The word rendered *simple* literally means *those who are open to persuasion,* or who are easily enticed or seduced. Then it refers to the credulous, Prov. xiv. 15, and then to the *inexperienced.* See Notes on Ps. xix. 7; cxvi. 6.

131. *I opened my mouth and panted.* All this is the language of deep emotion. We breathe hard under the influence of such emotion; we open the mouth wide, and pant, as the ordinary passage for the air through the nostrils is not sufficient to meet the wants of the lungs in their increased action. The idea is, that his heart was full; that he had such an intense desire as to produce deep and rapid breathing; that he was like one who was exhausted, and who "panted" for breath. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlii. 1. ¶ *For I longed for thy commandments.* The word here rendered *longed* occurs nowhere else. It means to desire earnestly. See Notes on ver. 20.

132. *Look thou upon me.* Turn not away from me. Regard me with thy favour. ¶ *And be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that*

133 Order [a] my steps in thy word: and [b] let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man; so will I keep thy precepts.

[a] Ps. xvii. 5.
[b] Ps. xix. 13; Rom. vi. 12, 14.

135 Make [c] thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

136 Rivers [d] of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

[c] Num. vi. 25, 26.
[d] Jer. xiii. 17; xiv. 17; Ez. ix. 4.

love thy name. Marg., *According to the custom toward those,* etc. The Hebrew word is *judgment*:—"according to the *judgment* to the lovers of thy name." The word seems here to be used in the sense of *right;* of what is *due;* or, of what is usually *determined:* that is, as God usually determines, judges, acts towards those who love him. The idea is, Treat me according to the rules which regulate the treatment of thy people. Let me be regarded as one of them, and be dealt with accordingly. On the sentiment in this passage, see Notes on Ps. cvi. 4.

133. *Order my steps in thy word.* My goings, or, my conduct and life,—by thy word; according to thy requirements. Let me be wholly obedient to thy will. ¶ *And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.* See Notes on Ps. xix. 13. The prayer is, that *no* form of sin, that no wicked passion or propensity, might be allowed to rule over him. He who is willing that any one sin should rule in his heart, though he should be free from *all* other forms of sin, cannot be a pious man. See Notes on James ii. 10.

134. *Deliver me from the oppression of man.* From constraint on the part of man, so that I may be free to act as I please. Give me true religious liberty, and let me not be under any compulsion or constraint. The word rendered "*deliver*" is that which is usually rendered *redeem.* It is used here in the large sense of deliverance; and the prayer is an expression of what the true friends of religion have always sought, desired, and demanded—*freedom* of opinion—the richest blessing which man can enjoy. ¶ *So will I keep thy precepts.* My heart inclines to that; I desire it; and, if suffered to act without constraint, I will do it. As it is the purpose and the wish of my soul, I pray that all hindrances to the free exercise of my religion may be removed. How often has this prayer been offered in times of persecution! By how many millions of the dwellers on the earth might it even now be offered! What a blessing it is to those who *are* free from oppressive laws, that they *are* permitted to carry out the wishes of their hearts, and to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, with none to molest them or make them afraid.

135. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* Heb., "Let thy face give light to thy servant." See Notes on Ps. iv. 6. ¶ *And teach me thy statutes.* See Notes on ver. 12.

136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes.* My heart is sad, and my eyes pour forth floods of tears. It is not a gentle weeping, but my eyes are like a fountain which pours out full-flowing streams. See Jer. ix. 1. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears," etc. Comp. Jer. xiv. 17; Lam. i. 16; ii. 18. ¶ *Because they keep not thy law.* On account of the sins, the follies, the stupidity, and the transgressions of men. So the Saviour wept over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41); and so the apostle said that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in his heart, on account of his "brethren," his "kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. ix. 2, 3. Such a feeling is right. There is nothing for which we should be excited to deeper emotion in respect to our fellow-men than for the fact that they are violators of the law of God,

TZADDI.

137 Righteous *e art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments.

138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* [1] righteous and very [2] faithful.

139 My zeal *f* hath [3] consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word *is* very [4] pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

e Dan. ix. 7. [1] *righteousness.* [2] *faithfulness.* *f* Ps. lxix. 9. [3] *cut me off.* [4] *tried*, or, *refined.*

and exposed to its fearful penalty. There is nothing which more certainly indicates true piety in the soul than such deep compassion for men *as* sinners, or *because* they are sinners. There is nothing which is more certainly connected with a work of grace in a community, or revival of true religion, than when such a feeling pervades a church. Then Christians will pray; then they will labour to save sinners; then they will feel their dependence on God; and then the Spirit of God will descend and bless the efforts put forth for the salvation of men. It may be added, nothing is more remarkable than that pious men ordinarily feel so little on account of the danger of their friends and fellow-sinners,—that the occasions are so rare on which they imitate the example of the psalmist and of the Saviour in weeping over the condition of a perishing world!

137. *Righteous* art *thou, O* LORD, etc. This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Tzaddi*—corresponding with *tz*. The thought in this verse is, that God is right, or righteous, in his judgments, that is, in his law; or, in other words, that his law is founded on principles of equity.

138. *Thy testimonies* that *thou hast commanded.* Thy law, considered as a *testimony* as to what is right and best. ¶ Are *righteous and very faithful.* Marg., as in Heb., *righteousness* and *faithfulness.* They are *so* righteous, and so deserving of confidence,—so certain to be accomplished, and so worthy to be trusted in,—that they may be spoken of as *righteousness* and *fidelity* of the most perfect kind; the very essence of that which is right.

139. *My zeal hath consumed me.* Marg., *cut me off.* The word which is here translated *consumed* is rendered *cut off* in Lam. iii. 53; Job xxiii. 17; Ps. liv. 5; lxxxviii. 16; xciv. 23; ci. 5; cxliii. 12; *vanish*, Job vi. 17; *destroyed*, Ps. lxxiii. 27; 2 Sam. xxii. 41; Ps. xviii. 40; ci. 8; lxix. 4. It means here, that he pined away; that his strength was exhausted; that he was sinking under the efforts which he had put forth as expressive of his deep interest in the cause of God and of truth. On the sentiment here expressed, see Notes on Ps. lxix. 9. ¶ *Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.* Thy law; thy commands. It was not because they were *his* foes,—not because he was endeavouring to destroy them, or to take vengeance on them,—but because they were unmindful of God, and of the claims of his law. It is a great triumph which religion gains over a man's soul, when, in looking on the conduct of persecutors, calumniators, and slanderers—of those who are constantly doing us wrong,—we are more grieved because they violate the law of God than because they injure us; when our solicitude is turned from ourselves, and terminates on our regard for the honour of God and his law. Yet *that* is the nature of true religion; and *that* we should be able to find in ourselves in such circumstances. A man should doubt the evidence of his personal religion, if all his feelings terminate on the wrong done to himself by the wicked conduct of others; if he has no feeling of solicitude because the law of God has been violated, and God has been dishonoured. Comp. Notes on ver. 136.

141 I *am* small and despised; *yet* do not I forget thy precepts.
142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and *g* thy law *is* the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have [1] taken hold on me; *yet* thy commandments *are* my delights.

g John xvii. 17.

[1] *found me.*

140. *Thy word* is *very pure.* Marg., *tried* or *refined.* See the word explained in the Notes on Ps. xviii. 30. ¶ *Therefore thy servant loveth it.* Therefore *I* love it. I love it *because* it is pure, holy, true; not merely because it will save *me.* Apart from all reference to myself. I *love* thy truth *as* truth; I love purity *as* purity; I love law *as* law; I love holiness *as* holiness. This is true religion.

141. *I* am *small and despised.* The word here rendered *small* may mean "small" in respect to number,—that is, *few,* Micah v. 2; Isa. lx. 22; or in respect to age,—*young,* Gen. xix. 31; or in respect to dignity,—*low;* least in rank or esteem. The language here may be applied to the church as comparatively few; to one who is young; or to one in humble life. Either of these may be a reason why one is regarded as of little consequence, or may be subject to reproach and ridicule. It is not possible to determine in which of these senses the word is used here, or in which sense it was applicable to the psalmist. The word *despised* means treated as unworthy of notice; passed by; looked upon with contempt. This might be on account of age, or poverty, or ignorance, or humble rank:—or it might be simply on account of his religion, for the friends of God have been, and often are, despised simply *because* they are religious. The Saviour was *despised* by men; the apostles were; the most excellent of the earth in all ages have been. Comp. Heb. xi. 36–38; 1 Cor. iv. 13. ¶ Yet *do not I forget thy precepts.* I am not ashamed of them. I am not deterred from keeping them, and from avowing my purpose to obey them, because I am despised for it. This is often one of the severest tests of religion, and to be faithful in such circumstances is one of the clearest proofs of true attachment to God. There are few things which we are less able to bear than *contempt,* and one of the best evidences of attachment to *principle* is when we adhere to what we regard as right and true, though we are despised for it by the gay, the worldly, the rich—by those who claim to be "*wise.*" He who can bear *contempt* on account of his opinions, can usually bear anything.

142. *Thy righteousness* is *an everlasting righteousness.* It never changes. The principles of thy law, of thy government, and of thy method of saving men, are the same under all dispensations, in every land, in all worlds; and they will remain the same for ever. Human governments change. Old dynasties pass away. New laws are enacted under new administrations. Customs change. Opinions change. Men change. The world changes. But as God himself never changes, so it is with his law. That law is founded on eternal truth, and can *never* change. ¶ *And thy law is the truth.* It is founded on "truth;" on the reality of things. It is so essentially founded on truth, it springs so certainly out of truth, or out of the reality of things, that it may be said *to be* the truth itself. He who understands the law of God understands what truth is, for it is the expression and the exponent of that which is true.

143 *Trouble and anguish.* The word rendered *trouble* means affliction of any kind; the word rendered *anguish* would probably express that which results from being *pressed, compressed, straitened.* It properly refers to a situation where there is no room to move, and where we are pent up in a narrow place. The two words denote *deep affliction.* ¶ *Have taken hold on me.* Marg., as in Heb., *found me.* That is, they were in pur-

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall [h] live.

KOPH.

145 I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, [1] and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 I [i] prevented the dawning

[h] Prov. x. 21. [1] Or, *that I may.* [i] Ps. cxxx. 6.

suit of me, and have at last apprehended me. Trouble, anguish, death, are *in pursuit* of us all our lives, and are never very far in the rear of us. Often, when we least expect them, they come suddenly up to us, and make us their victims. ¶ Yet *thy commandments* are *my delights.* Notwithstanding this trouble, and *in* this trouble—no matter what comes—I have the same unfailing source of comfort, the truth of God; and notwithstanding what *may* occur, I still make God and his law the source of my happiness. See Notes on ver. 24.

144. *The righteousness of thy testimonies.* The principles of righteousness on which they are founded. Those testimonies—those laws—are not arbitrary, or the mere expressions of *will.* They are founded on right and justice as seen by God, and his laws are his *testimony* as to what truth and justice are. ¶ Is *everlasting.* See Notes on ver. 142. ¶ *Give me understanding, and I shall live.* Give me a right view of thy law, and thy truth, and I shall have real *life.* See Notes on ver. 34.

145. *I cried with* my *whole heart,* etc. This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Koph,* answering to our letter *k.* The expression "I cried with my whole heart" means that he did it earnestly, fervently. He had no divided wishes when he prayed. Not always is this so, even with good people. They sometimes offer a form of prayer, that they may be spiritually-minded, when their hearts are intensely worldly, and they would be unwilling to be otherwise; or that religion may be revived, when their hearts have no lively interest in it, and no wish for it; or that they may live wholly to God, when they are making all their arrangements to live for the world, and when they would be greatly disappointed if God should take means to *make* them live entirely to him; or that they may be humble, childlike, sincere, when they have no wish to be any otherwise than they are now, and when they would regard it as an affront if it should be assumed by any that they are *not* so now, and if they were exhorted to change their course of life. Often it would be a great surprise—perhaps *grief*—even to professedly religious persons, if God should answer their prayers, and should *make* them what they professedly desire to be, and what they pray that they may be. See Notes on Ps. ix. 1; comp. Ps. cxi. 1; cxxxviii. 1; cxix. 2, 10, 34, 58, 69; Jer. xxiv. 7. ¶ *I will keep thy statutes.* It is my purpose and desire to keep thy law perfectly.

146. *I cried unto thee.* I called upon thee in trouble. ¶ *Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.* Marg., *That I may keep.* The correct rendering is, "I will keep." The idea is, that if God would interpose and save him, he *would* henceforward faithfully keep the law of God. It is one of the designs of affliction to lead men to make such vows as this. They *are* commonly made on beds of sickness, alike by the religious and the irreligious; the saint and the sinner. How often, alas, are they forgotten even by the friends of God! How seldom are they remembered at all by the sinner when he is raised up from the verge of the grave, and restored again to health!

147. *I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried.* I *anticipated* it; I rose up to pray *before* the morning dawned. On the word *prevent,* see Notes on 1 Thess. iv. 15; Ps. xxi. 3; lix. 10; lxxix. 8. The meaning here

of the morning, and cried; I hoped in thy word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

149 Hear my voice, according unto thy loving-kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

151 Thou [k] *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.

[k] Ps. cxxxix. 2, etc.

is, that he rose up before the dawn, to pray. Thus the Saviour did, Mark i. 35. (*a*) It is *proper* thus to pray; for our earliest thoughts should be those of devotion; our earliest acts should be in acknowledgment of God. (*b*) Such a time is eminently favourable to devotion. Calm, still, quiet; —before the thoughts are engaged in the world, and before the cares of life press upon us,—when the thoughts are clear, and the mind tranquil,—the soul is in the best state for devotion. (*c*) All men, if they will, can secure this time, before the "dawning of the morning," to pray. Comp. Notes on Ps. v. 3; lxxxviii. 13; see also Ps. cxxx. 6. The word rendered "dawning of the morning," is from a verb which means to blow; to blow gently; and is usually applied to the evening, when the breezes blow gently. It may be applied, however, as it clearly is here, also to the morning. ¶ *I hoped in thy word.* I prayed *because* I had hope in thy word; I exercised hope in thy word *then.* Alone with thee in the morning, I found consolation by trusting in thy gracious promises.

148. *Mine eyes prevent the* night *watches.* Luther renders this, "I wake up early." The Hebrew word means *a watch*—a part of the night, so called from military watches, or a dividing of the night to "keep guard." See Notes on Ps. xc. 4. The idea of the psalmist here is, that he *anticipated* these regular divisions of the night in order that he might engage in devotion. Instead of waiting for their return, he arose for prayer *before* they recurred—so much did his heart delight in the service of God. The language would seem to be that of one who was accustomed to pray in these successive "watches" of the night—the early, the middle, and the dawn. This may illustrate what occurs in the life of all who love God. They will have regular seasons of devotion, but they will often *anticipate* those seasons. They will be in a state of mind which prompts them to pray; when nothing will meet their state of mind *but* prayer; and when they cannot wait for the regular and ordinary season of devotion,—like a hungry man who cannot wait for the usual and regular hour of his meals. The meaning of the phrase, "*mine eyes* prevent," is that he awoke before the usual time for devotion. ¶ *That I might meditate in thy word.* See Notes on Ps. i. 2.

149. *Hear my voice, according unto thy loving-kindness.* According to thy mercy; thy goodness. Let *that* be the rule in answering me; not *my* deserts, or even the fervour of my prayers. We can desire no better rule in answer to our prayers. ¶ *O* LORD, *quicken me.* Give me life; cause me truly to live. See Notes on ver. 40. ¶ *According to thy judgment.* Thy law as a rule of judgment; thy revealed truth, with all its gracious promises.

150. *They draw nigh.* They follow me; they press hard upon me. ¶ *That follow after mischief.* That seek to do me wrong. ¶ *They are far from thy law.* They yield no obedience to it; they are not influenced by it in their conduct towards me.

151. *Thou* art *near, O* LORD. God was present with him; he was ready to hear his cry; he was at hand to save him. Comp. Ps. cxlv. 18. The psalmist had the assurance, springing from deep feeling, and the conscious

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for *l* ever.

RESH.

153 Consider *m* mine affliction, and deliver me; for I do not forget thy law.

154 Plead *n* my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

155 Salvation *is* far *o* from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

l Luke xxi. 33. *m* Lam. v. 1. *n* Mic. vii. 9; 1 John ii. 1. *o* Luke xvi. 23, 24.

presence of God, which the people of God often have, that God is very *near* to them; that he is ready to hear them; that their prayers are answered; that they are in the presence of a Heavenly Friend. Such are among the precious experiences of the life of a religious man. ¶ *And all thy commandments* are *truth.* All that thou hast ordained; all that thou hast promised. The psalmist *felt* this. He was experiencing the truth of what God had assured him of. Not a doubt came into his mind,—for God was *near* him. This conviction that God is "*near*" us—this manifestation of God to the soul as a present God,—is one of the most certain assurances to our own minds of the truth of religion, and of our acceptance with him.

152. *Concerning thy testimonies.* In regard to all that thou hast *testified* to as true and best. Every command of God is in fact a *testimony* of his as to what is right; every promise is a testimony of his own purpose in regard to mankind. ¶ *I have known of old.* The word here used is a noun, and means properly, *the front,* what is *before;* then, the East; then, what pertains to olden time or ancient days—*before* the present. The meaning here is, that he had known this *before* what had now occurred; it was not a new thing—a new experience. It was deeply impressed on his mind as the result of all his reflection and observation. ¶ *That thou hast founded them for ever. From* eternity, and *for* eternity. They were laid in the eternity past; they will continue in the eternity to come. They are based on eternal principles of right; they will never be changed. Such a conviction will do much to keep the soul steady and firm in the trials and uncertainties of life. Whatever may change, God's law does not change; whatever is new, that is not new; whatever will vanish away, that will remain.

153. *Consider mine affliction,* etc. This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Resh,* corresponding to our *r.* The prayer here is, that God would look upon his trial; that he would regard it as it really was; that he would not turn away from it, or pass it by, as if it were a trifle—a thing not worthy to claim his attention. See Notes on Ps. ix. 13. ¶ *For I do not forget thy law.* I endeavour to be obedient, submissive, patient. *As* a suffering child of thine, I come to thee, and beseech thee to interpose and save me.

154. *Plead my cause,* etc. Undertake my cause, as an advocate does. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 1. ¶ *Quicken me,* etc. Give me life. See Notes on ver. 25.

155. *Salvation* is *far from the wicked.* That is, (*a*) in their present course:—they are very far from being *safe,* or from having a prospect of salvation. (*b*) They are constantly going farther and farther off,—making their salvation less probable,—not going *toward* heaven, but *from* it. (*c*) Destruction is very near to them, and they are constantly *making* it nearer and nearer. (*d*) In their present course it may be said that salvation is *far*—is *infinitely* remote—from them, so that they can never come to it. (*e*) If they would be saved, they must change their course altogether, and go *towards* salvation and not *from* it. ¶ *For they seek not thy statutes.* They do not

156 [1] Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD; quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving-kindness.

160 [2] Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

[1] Or, *Many.*

[2] *The beginning of thy word* is *true.*

regard thy law; they do not make it a principle to obey thy commandments.

156. *Great* are *thy tender mercies, O* LORD. They are many, or multiplied. The word rendered "tender mercies" is the same which occurs in Ps. xl. 11; li. 1; lxix. 16; lxxix. 8; ciii. 4. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 6. ¶ *Quicken me,* etc. See ver. 149.

157. *Many* are *my persecutors and mine enemies.* The thought here turns on the *number* of his enemies, and on the effect which *numbers* might have in turning one from the way of truth. We might meet *one* such enemy, and overcome him; we might resist the influence of *one* in endeavouring to turn us away from the truth, but the danger of falling is much increased when *numbers* are combined in persecuting us, or in seeking to turn us away from our religion,—when it becomes *unpopular* to be a professed friend of God. ¶ Yet *do I not decline from thy testimonies.* I still adhere to thee; I still maintain my integrity, notwithstanding all this. See Notes on ver. 51.

158. *I beheld the transgressors.* Those who wronged me; those who violated the law of God. ¶ *And was grieved.* Or, *sickened.* The word here used means commonly to loathe, to nauseate, to sicken. Ezek. xvi. 47; Ps. xcv. 10. I was made sad, sorry, sick at heart. I did not look on them with anger; I did not desire to take revenge upon them; I did not return evil for evil. My heart was sad that men *would* do wrong; that they *would* expose themselves to such danger. See Notes on ver. 136. ¶ *Because they kept not thy word.* Because they violated thy law; because they were sinners.

159. *Consider how I love thy precepts.* Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law. It is similar to the appeal of Peter to the Saviour (John xxi. 17), "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." A man who truly loves God *may* make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident—so certain—that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject—as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man *ought* to have such love for *them,* that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man *ought* to have such love for *God,* that he could affirm this with equal confidence and propriety. ¶ *Quicken me,* etc. See Notes on ver. 25.

160. *Thy word* is *true* from *the beginning.* Literally, "The head of thy word is truth." Probably the meaning is, that the *principles* of God's word were truth, or were based on truth. The main thing—that on which all relied—was truth, absolute truth. It was not *made* truth by the mere will of God, but it was *founded on* essential truth. Comp. Notes on vers. 142, 144. Marg., *The beginning of thy word is true.* Its origin is truth; its foundation is truth; its essential nature is truth. See Ps. xix. 9. ¶ *And every one of thy righteous judgments* endureth *for*

SCHIN.

161 Princes [p] have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162 I rejoice [q] at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

163 I hate and abhor lying; *but* thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

[p] 1 Sam. xxiv. 11, 17; xxvi. 21, 23.

[q] ver. 111.

ever. Since any one of thy laws is as certainly founded in truth as any other, it must be that all alike are eternal and unchanging. It must be so with all the essential principles of morality. Mere regulations in regard to rites and ceremonies may be altered, as local and municipal laws among men may be; but essential principles of justice cannot be. A civil corporation—the government of a city or borough—may change its regulations about streets, and culverts, and taxes; but they can never enact laws authorizing murder or theft; nor can they alter the essential nature of honesty and dishonesty; of truth and falsehood.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause.* This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Schin*—corresponding to our *s*, or *sh*. On the meaning of the expression here, see Notes on vers. 23, 78. ¶ *But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.* I still reverence thy word. I am not deterred from keeping thy law by any threats or intimidations. This is in accordance with the uniform statements in the psalm, that *nothing* deterred him from manifesting his adherence to the law of God.

162. *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.* Plunder in a camp; prey; booty:—as the hunter or the warrior, when he lights on great and unexpected success.

163. *I hate and abhor lying.* The mention of *lying* here particularly seems to have been suggested by the necessity, from the structure of the psalm, of finding some word at the beginning of the verse which commenced with the letter *Schin*. At the same time, it is an illustration of the nature of piety, and doubtless there had been numerous occasions in the life of the psalmist when he had seen and experienced the effects of falsehood. *This* sin, therefore, might occur to him as readily as any other. It is unnecessary to say that religion *forbids* this sin in all its forms. ¶ But *thy law do I love.* Particularly here the law which forbids lying. The psalmist was conscious, as every good man must be, that he truly *loved* that pure law which forbids falsehood in all its forms.

164. *Seven times a day.* The word *seven* may be used here, as it is often in the Scriptures, indefinitely to denote *many*, or *often*. There is, however, nothing which makes it necessary to understand it in this sense. The number of times in which it is proper and profitable to engage in secret or public devotion is nowhere specified in the Scriptures, but it is left, under a general direction, to be determined by each one as he shall find it desirable and convenient; as his feelings or his circumstances shall suggest. On another occasion (Ps. lv. 17) David mentions that he prayed "evening, and morning, and at noon;" at other times, perhaps, he might have found it in accordance with his feelings, or with his circumstances, to engage in devotion *seven* times in a day. There are circumstances in the lives of all good men when they are prompted to do this:—times of trouble, of sickness, of bereavement, of danger, or of religious interest. There are states of mind which prompt to this, and when secret devotion becomes frequent, and almost constant;—when nothing will satisfy the mind *but* prayer. No one would be injured

165 Great peace [r] have they which love thy law: and [1] nothing shall offend them.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for [s] all my ways *are* before thee.

r Prov. iii. 2; Isa. xxxii. 17; John xiv. 27; Phil. iv. 7.

1 *They shall have no stumbling-block,* 1 Pet. ii. 8; 1 John ii. 10.

s Ps. cxxxix. 3; Prov. v. 21.

by making it a rule, unless unavoidably prevented, to engage seven times each day in secret prayer, though, at the same time, no one could maintain that this is required *as* a rule by the Scriptures. The times, the circumstances, the manner, the place of secret devotion are wisely and properly left to each individual to be determined by himself. Religion is essentially voluntary, and the times of secret devotion must be voluntary, and *therefore* a man can easily determine, by his own secret devotions, whether he *has* any peculiar interest at any particular time in religion, or whether he has any religion at all. ¶ *Do I praise thee.* Do I engage in devotion. ¶ *Because of thy righteous judgments.* Thy law, considered *as* righteous. I love that law, as such, and I praise thee for it.

165. *Great peace have they.* See Notes on Isa. xxvi. 3; comp. Notes on Phil. iv. 6, 7. They have great calmness of mind. They are not troubled and anxious. They believe and feel that all things are well-ordered by thee, and will be conducted to the best result. They, therefore, calmly leave all with thee. As a matter of fact, the friends of God *have* peace and calmness in their minds, even amidst the troubles, the disappointments, and the reverses of life. The love of God is the best—the only—way to secure permanent peace in the soul. ¶ *Which love thy law.* It is the love of *law,* and the belief that the law of God is in accordance with justice, that gives peace to their minds. God's government is a government of law, and therefore it is loved. ¶ *And nothing shall offend them.* Marg., *They shall have no stumbling-block.* "Heb., "And to them no stumbling," or stumbling-block. See Notes on Matt. v. 29, 30; xviii. 6; xvi. 23; 1 Pet. ii. 8; James ii. 10. The meaning here is, that they would not fall into sin; they would be kept safe; they would be preserved from the power of temptation. The meaning is not, as it would seem to be in our version, that nothing would pain, grieve, or irritate them; but, as above, that as long as they were obedient to the law, and disposed to obey it, they would be safe from the power of temptation.

166. LORD, *I have hoped for thy salvation.* As a prevailing habit or principle in my life. I have looked to thee for deliverance in the time of danger; I have looked to thee for salvation in the world to come. ¶ *And done thy commandments.* That is, habitually. This is not, necessarily, a claim to absolute perfection.

167. *My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* I am conscious of loving them; I feel an inward assurance that I do love them.

168. *I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies.* This is an appeal which is several times made in the psalm; not with boasting, but as indicating the tenor and purpose of his life. Every man *ought* to be able to make such an appeal. ¶ *For all my ways* are *before thee.* Thou hast seen my manner of life, and I may appeal to thee in proof that I have thus kept thy law. No one can lay claim to entire perfection, but there is many a man who, while conscious of much imperfection, and many shortcomings, can appeal to God for the truth of the statement that his great aim of

TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give [t] me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

[t] Prov. ii. 6, 7; James i. 5.

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

173 Let thine hand help me: for I [u] have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy sal-

[u] Jos. xxiv. 22; Luke x. 42.

life has been to keep his commandments.

169. *Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD. This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *Tau*, corresponding to our *t*, or *th*. The petition here is, that his prayer might be heard; that it might come into the very presence of God; that there might be no obstructions to its reaching where God was. Let nothing from my unworthiness, from my past sins, from my ignorance, prevent its coming before thee. Something often *apparently* hinders our prayers so that they do not reach the ear of God. The psalmist prays here that there may be no such hindrance in the prayer which he now offers. ¶ *Give me understanding according to thy word.* According to the promises of thy word; or, give me the same views of truth which are set forth in thy word. This prayer had been several times offered before, and it shows how earnest was his desire to know the truth. See vers. 34, 73, 144.

170. *Let my supplication come before thee.* The word here rendered *supplication* properly means *favour, mercy, pity*, Josh. xi. 20; Ezra ix. 8; then, that by which favour or mercy is sought,—prayer or petition, Ps. vi. 9; lv. 1. ¶ *Deliver me according to thy word.* From my enemies, my sins, my dangers. According to thy promises; according to the arrangements *in* thy word.

171. *My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.* The sentiment here is the same as in ver. 7. The language is varied, but the meaning here, as in that verse, is, I will praise thee in proportion as I learn thy precepts or thy law. The more I learn of thy will, the more I will praise thee. I shall see more for which to offer praise and adoration, and I shall be more and more inclined to praise and adore thee. Each new degree of knowledge will excite a corresponding desire to praise thee. This *will* be true of all who love God, while this life lasts, and for ever. The ever-increasing knowledge of God will excite ever-increasing praise; and as God is infinite and eternal, it follows that the increase of knowledge and of happiness, in those who are saved, will be eternal. These things will go hand in hand for ever and ever.

172. *My tongue shall speak of thy word.* It shall speak of it in the language of praise; it shall speak of it in making it known to others. ¶ *For all thy commandments* are *righteousness.* I see this; I feel it; and, therefore, I will speak of it. My impression that thy commandments are all *righteous* is so deep, that I cannot but speak of them. I must vindicate them; I must praise thee for them.

173. *Let thine hand help me.* Do *thou* help me,—the hand being that by which we accomplish anything. ¶ *For I have chosen thy precepts.* I have chosen them as my comforters and my guide. I have resolved to obey them, and I pray that thou wilt help me to accomplish the purpose of my heart.

174. *I have longed for thy salva-*

vation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my [v] delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

[v] Ps. i. 2.

176 I [w] have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

[w] Isa. liii. 6; Luke xv. 4, etc.; 1 Pet. ii. 25.

tion, O LORD. See Notes on ver. 166. The word rendered *I have longed* denotes an earnest desire or wish. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlii. 1, and on ver. 20 of this psalm. ¶ *And thy law* is *my delight.* It is so much the object of my delight that I earnestly long or desire to see more and more of its richness and fulness.

175. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.* I desire life that I *may* praise thee; if I do live, I *will* praise thee. My life is consecrated to thy service; if lengthened out, and as far as it shall be lengthened out, it shall be devoted to thee. ¶ *And let thy judgments help me.* The dealings of thy hand; the interpositions of thy providence. Let them all be such as will be favourable to the great purpose of my soul—the service of my God.

176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep.* A sheep that has wandered away from its fold, and is without a protector. Comp. Isa. liii. 6; Matt. x. 6; xv. 24; xviii. 12; Luke xv. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 25. I am a wanderer. I have lost the path to true happiness. I have strayed away from my God. I see this; I confess it; I desire to return. It is remarkable that this is almost the only confession of sin in the psalm. This psalm, more than any other, abounds in confident statements respecting the life of the author, his attachment to the law of God, the obedience which he rendered to that law, and his love for it,—as well as with appeals to God, founded on the fact that he *did* love that law, and that his life was one of obedience. This is not, indeed, spoken in a spirit of self-righteousness, or as constituting a claim on the ground of merit; but it is remarkable that there is so frequent reference to it, and so little intermingling of a confession of sin, of error, of imperfection. The psalm would not have been complete as a record of religious experience, or as illustrating the real state of the human heart, without a distinct acknowledgment of sin, and hence, in its close, and in view of his whole life, upright as in the main it had been, the psalmist confesses that he had wandered; that he was a sinner; that his life had been far from perfection, and that he needed the gracious interposition of God to seek him out, and to bring him back. ¶ *Seek thy servant.* As the shepherd does the sheep that is lost, Luke xv. 4–6. So the Saviour came to seek and to save that which was lost, Luke xix. 10. So God seeks the wanderer by his word, by his providence, by his Spirit, to induce him to return and be saved. ¶ *For I do not forget thy commandments.* In all my wandering; with my consciousness of error; with my sense of guilt, I still *do* feel that I love thy law—thy service—thy commandments. They are the joy of my heart, and I desire to be recalled from all my wanderings, that I may find perfect happiness in thee and in thy service evermore. Such is the earnest wish of every regenerated heart. Far as such an one may have wandered from God, yet he is conscious of true attachment to him and his service; he desires and earnestly prays that he may be "sought out," brought back, and kept from wandering any more.

PSALM CXX.

This is the first of fifteen psalms (cxx.–cxxxiv.) to each of which is prefixed the title "A Song of Degrees." Four of these psalms are ascribed to David, one of them to Solomon, and the rest are by unknown authors.

There has been a great diversity of opinion as to the meaning of the title, and the reason why it was prefixed to these psalms. Some have supposed that the title, "Song of Degrees," or "*Ascents*," was applied to them as being psalms which were sung during the periodical journeys or pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the times of the great yearly festivals—the *going up* to Jerusalem. Others have supposed that they were psalms which were composed or sung during the return from the exile—the *going up* again to Jerusalem after their long captivity in Babylon. Some of the Jewish rabbins supposed that they were psalms which were sung as the people ascended the fifteen steps—going up to the temple represented by Ezekiel, seven on one side and eight on the other, Ezek. xl. 22, 37. Others have supposed that the title refers to some peculiarity of structure in the psalms—a gradation or elevation of thought—approaching to a climax. Michaelis (Notes on Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, xxv., p. 512) supposes that the title is a musical term, and that the reference is to something peculiar in the rhythm, or what is called by us, "feet" of the psalm, but which in the East would be called *steps* or *ascents*. See De Wette, Einleitung, p. 35.

In this variety of conjecture—for it can be regarded as little more than conjecture—it is impossible now to determine with any degree of certainty what is the true meaning of the title, or why it was given to these psalms. It is evident that, from some cause, there was such a *unity* in them, either from the nature of the composition, or from the occasion on which they were used, that they could properly have a general title given to them, as indicating what would be well understood among the Hebrews in regard to their design. But I apprehend that the *reason* for that title cannot now be positively ascertained. Something *negative*, however, may be determined in regard to this. (1) It is quite clear that the opinion of the rabbins that they were fifteen in number, and named Songs of *Degrees*, because they were sung on ascending the steps to the temple, is purely fanciful. In the *real* temple there was no such ascent; and it is only in the visions of Ezekiel that there is any such allusion. (2) It seems equally clear that they were not so called because they were composed and used for the *going up* from the captivity in Babylon, or to be sung during the march through the desert. Several of them—those of David and Solomon—were composed long before that event, and could have had no allusion to it. Besides, there are but two of them (cxxii., cxxvi.) that have any reference to the return from Babylon, or that would have any applicability to that journey. Moreover, it is extremely improbable that any such selection of psalms should have been used on such a journey, or that any arrangement should have been made for such a purpose. (3) It seems to me equally improbable that they were called "Songs of Degrees or Ascents," because they were used by the people when *going up* to Jerusalem to attend on the great festivals. As in the previous specification, it may be remarked that the psalms here referred to had no special applicability to such a use; that there is no evidence that any such practice prevailed; that it is wholly improbable that there would be any such set and fixed arrangement, or that the people in going up to Jerusalem on those occasions *would* move along to measured music.

The word rendered *degrees* in the title, —מַעֲלָה, *maalah*, in the singular,—and מַעֲלוֹת, *maaloth*, in the plural, the form used here—means properly an *ascent*, a *going up*, as from a lower to a higher region, Ezra vii. 9 (marg.); or of the thoughts that ascend in the mind, Ezek. xi. 5. Then it means a *step*, by which one ascends, 1 Kings x. 19; Ezek. xl. 26, 31, 34. Then it means a degree of a dial, or a dial as divided into degrees, where there is an *ascent* on the dial, 2 Kings xx. 9-11. See Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 8. After what has been said above, there seem to be but *two* suppositions which have probability in regard to its meaning here:—(*a*) The one is the opinion of Gesenius, that these psalms are called Songs of Degrees, or Ascents, because of a certain *ascent* in the mode of composition, as when the first or last words of a preceding line are repeated at the beginning of a succeeding line, and then some new *increase* in the sense or idea,—or some *ascent* in the meaning,—follows by such an addition. The following instances may be referred to as illustrating this view. Ps. cxxi. 1, 2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh *my help*:—*My help* cometh from the Lord," etc.

PSALM CXX.

A Song of degrees.

IN [x] my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

[x] Jonah ii. 2.

Vers. 3, 4: "He that *keepeth* thee will not slumber:—Behold, he that *keepeth* Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Vers. 7, 8: "The Lord shall *preserve* thee from all evil; he shall *preserve* thy soul:—The Lord shall *preserve* thy going out, and thy coming in," etc. So also Ps. cxxiv. 1, 2: "If it had not been the Lord who was *on our side*, now may Israel say: If it had not been the Lord who was *on our side;* when men rose up against us,—*then* (ver. 3) they had swallowed us up quick; *then* (ver. 4) the waters had overwhelmed us; *then* (ver. 5) the proud waters had gone over our soul." See also Ps. cxxii. 2, 3, 4; cxxiii. 3, 4; cxxvi. 2, 3; and cxxix. 1, 2. There is doubtless some foundation for this supposition, but, after all, it seems far-fetched, and though the remark may be true of some of these fifteen psalms, yet it can by no means be made applicable to all of them, nor could it be shown to be so *peculiar* to them that no others could have been for the same reason included in the number. (*b*) The remaining supposition seems to have much more plausibility than any one here suggested. It is that the term is a *musical* expression; that there was something peculiar in the "*scale*" of the music to which these psalms were sung, though that is now lost to us. This is akin to the opinion of J. D. Michaelis, as alluded to above. This is, also, referred to by Asseman (Biblioth. Orient., t. i., p. 62), and by Castell (Lex. Syr.) It is impossible, however, now to ascertain *what* there is that would make this appellation peculiarly appropriate to these psalms. All that can be *known* is, that there was some reason why these psalms were, so to speak, bound up together, and designated by a common title. This does not prevent a *special* title being prefixed to some of them in regard to their author and design.

The psalm now before us has no other title, and nothing to designate its author. It pertains to a sufferer who calls earnestly upon the Lord for deliverance. The particular form of trial is that caused by the *tongue*,—slander. The author was suffering from some unjust aspersions cast upon him; from some effort to destroy his reputation; from some charge in regard to his character, which made him miserable, as if he sojourned in Mesech, and dwelt in the tents of Kedar, ver. 5. He says that it was in vain for him to attempt to live in peace with the men who calumniated him. He was himself disposed to peace. He earnestly desired it. But they were for war, and they kept up the war, vers. 6, 7. Among the forms of suffering to which the people of God are exposed, this is not uncommon; and it was proper that it should be referred to in a book designed, as the Book of Psalms was, to be useful in all ages, and in all lands, as a record of religious experience.

1. *In my distress.* In my suffering, as arising from *slander*, vers. 2, 3. There are few forms of suffering more keen than those caused by slander—

> "Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
> Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
> All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states,
> Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
> This viperous slander enters."
>
> *Cymbeline*, iii. 4.

It is one of those things which a man cannot guard against; which he cannot repel by force; whose origin he cannot always trace; which will go where a vindication will not follow; whose effects will live long after the slander is refuted; which will adhere to a man, or leave a trait of suspicion, even after the most successful vindication, for the effect will be to make a *second* slander more easily credited than the first was. ¶ *I cried unto the* LORD, *and he heard me.* I had no other resource. I could not meet the slander. I could not refute it. I could not prevent its effects on my reputation, and all that I could do was to commit the case to the Lord. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.

3 [1] What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done [2] unto thee, thou false tongue?

4 [3] Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

[1] Or, *What shall* the deceitful tongue *give unto thee?* or, *what shall it profit thee?*
[2] *added.*
[3] Or, It is as *the sharp arrows of the mighty* man.

2. *Deliver my soul,* O LORD. My soul is harassed and distressed. Perhaps the meaning also may be, My life is in danger. Or, if it refers to the soul as such, then it means that everything pertaining to his soul was deeply affected by the course which was pursued. He was maligned, slandered, misrepresented, deceived, and he had no comfort or peace. ¶ *From lying lips.* False, deceitful, slanderous. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxi. 18. ¶ And *from a deceitful tongue.* From a tongue whose statements cannot be relied on; whose words are deceptive; whose promises are false. David was often called to experience troubles of this sort; and this is a kind of trial which may come upon any one in a form which he can no more anticipate or prevent than he can the coming of a "mist from the ocean." No man can certainly guard against the influence of falsehood; no man can be sure that all that will be said to him is true; no man can be certain that all the promises made to him—save those made to him by God—will be performed.

3. *What shall be given unto thee?* Marg., *What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee;* or, *what shall it profit thee?* Luther, "What can the false tongue do?" Others render this, "How will God punish thee?" Others, "What will he [God] give to thee?" That is, What recompence can you expect from God for these malignant calumnies? A *literal* translation of this verse would be, "What shall the tongue of deceit give to thee, and what shall it add to thee?"—referring to the offender himself. The essential idea is, What will be the result of such conduct? What must be expected to follow from it? That is, either (*a*) from the unprofitableness of such a course; or (*b*) from the natural consequences to one's reputation and happiness; or (*c*) from the judgment of God. The *answer* to these questions is found in ver. 4. ¶ *Or what shall be done unto thee?* Marg., as in Heb., *added.* What must be the consequence of this? what will follow? ¶ *Thou false tongue.* This may be either an address to the tongue itself, or, as above, the word "tongue" may be used as the nominative to the verbs in the sentence. The sense is not materially affected either way.

4. *Sharp arrows of the mighty.* This is an answer to the question in ver. 3. The consequence—the effect—of such a use of the tongue must be like sharp and piercing arrows, or like intensely burning coals. The "sharp arrows of the mighty" are the arrows of the warrior—as war was conducted mainly by bows and arrows. Those arrows were, of course, sharpened to make them piercing, penetrating, more deadly. ¶ *With coals of juniper.* On the word here rendered *juniper,* see Notes on Job xxx. 4. The idea here is, that coals made from that would be intensely hot, and would cause severer pain than if made from other wood. The word refers to a species of broom or shrub growing in the deserts of Arabia, with yellowish flowers and a bitter root. See "Robinson's Biblical Researches," vol. i., p. 299. Burchardt says that he found the Bedawin of Sinai burning the roots into coal, and says that they make the best charcoal, and throw out the most intense heat. The shrub sometimes grows so large as to furnish a shade to those exposed to the heat of the sun in the desert, 1 Kings xix. 4;

5 Woe is me that I sojourn in [y] Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of [z] Kedar!

y Gen. x. 2. z Gen. xxv. 13.

"Land and the Book" (Thomson), vol. ii., pp. 438, 439. The cut given below will give an idea of this plant.

5. *Woe is me.* My lot is a sad and pitiable one, that I am compelled to live in this manner, and to be exposed thus to malignant reproaches. It is like living in Mesech or in Kedar. ¶ *That I sojourn.* The word here used does not denote a *permanent* abode, but it usually refers to a temporary lodging, as when one is a traveller, a pilgrim, a stranger, and is under a necessity of passing a night in a strange land on his way to the place of his destination. The trouble or discomfort here referred to is not that which would result from having his *home* there, or abiding there permanently, but of feeling that he was a *stranger*, and would be exposed to all the evils and inconveniences *of* a stranger among such a people. A man who resided in a place permanently *might* be subject to fewer inconveniences than if he were merely a temporary lodger among strangers. ¶ *In Mesech.* The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "that my sojourning is protracted."



JUNIPER.

The Hebrew word—מֶשֶׁךְ, *meshech*—means, properly *drawing*, as of seed "scattered regularly along the furrows" (Ps. cxxvi. 6); and then *possession*, Job xxviii. 18. The people of *Meshech* or the *Moschi*, were a barbarous race inhabiting the Moschian regions between Iberia, Armenia, and Colchis. Meshech was a son of Japheth, Gen. x. 2; 1 Chron. i. 5. The name is connected commonly with *Tubal*, Ezek. xxvii. 13: "Tubal

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

7 I *am* [1] *for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

[1] Or, *a* man of *peace*.

and Meshech they were thy merchants." Ezek. xxxix. 1: "I am against . . . the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." Herodotus (iii. 94; vii. 78) connects them with the Tibarenes. The idea here is, that they were a barbarous, savage, uncivilized people. They dwelt outside of Palestine, beyond what were regarded as the borders of civilization; and the word seems to have had a signification similar to the names Goths, Vandals, Turks, Tartars, Cossacks, in later times. It is not known that they were particularly remarkable for slander or calumny; but the meaning is that they were barbarous and savage,—and to dwell among slanderers and revilers seemed to the psalmist to be *like* dwelling among a people who were strangers to all the rules and principles of civilized society. ¶ That *I dwell in the tents of Kedar*. The word *Kedar* means properly *dark skin*, a *dark-skinned man*. Kedar was a son of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 13), and hence the name was given to an Arabian tribe descended from him, Isa. xlii. 11; lx. 7; Jer. xlix. 28. The idea here also is, that to dwell among slanderers was like dwelling among barbarians and savages.

6. *My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.* This trouble is no new thing. It has been long continued, and has become intolerable. Who this was that thus gave him trouble is, of course, now unknown. It is only necessary to remark that there can scarcely be any source of trouble more bitter than that of sustaining such relations to others either in business, or in office, or by family-ties—whether by marriage or by blood—in school, in college, or in corporate bodies—as to expose us always to a quarrel:—to be compelled to have constant intercourse with men of sour, perverse, crooked tempers, who are satisfied with nothing; who are suspicious or envious; who pervert our motives and our conduct; who misrepresent our words; who demand more than is due to them; who refuse to perform what may reasonably be expected of them; and who make use of every opportunity to involve us in difficulties with others. There are many trials in human life, but there are few which are more galling, or more hard to bear than this. The literal rendering of the passage would be, "Long for her has my soul dwelt," etc. That is, long (or too long) for her good,—for the welfare of my soul. It has been an injury to me; to my piety, to my comfort, to my salvation. It has vexed me, tried me, hindered me in my progress in the Divine life. Nothing would have a greater tendency of this kind than to be compelled to live in the manner indicated above.

7. *I* am for *peace*. Marg., *A man of peace*. Literally, "I [am] peace." It is my nature. I desire to live in peace. I strive to do so. I do nothing to provoke a quarrel. I would do anything which would be right to pacify others. I would make any sacrifices, yield to any demands, consent to any arrangements which would promise peace. ¶ *But when I speak*. When I say anything on the subject, when I propose any new arrangements, when I suggest any changes, when I give utterance to my painful feelings, and express a desire to live differently—they will listen to nothing; they will be satisfied with nothing. ¶ *They* are *for war*. For discord, variance, strife. All my efforts to live in peace are vain. They are determined to quarrel, and I cannot prevent it. (*a*) A man in such a case should separate from such a person, if possible, as the only way of peace. (*b*) If his posi-

PSALM CXXI.

A Song of degrees.

I [1] will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

[1] Or, *Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? whence should my help come,* Jer. iii. 23.

tion and relations are such that *that* cannot be done, then he should be careful that he does nothing himself to irritate and to keep up the strife. (*c*) If all that he does or can do for peace is vain, and if his relations and position are such that he cannot separate, then he should bear it patiently—as coming from God, and as the discipline of *his* life. God has many ways of testing the patience and faith of his people, and there are few things which will do so more effectually than this; few situations where piety will shine more beautifully than in *such* a trial; (*d*) He who is thus tried should look with the more earnestness of desire to another world. There *is* a world of peace; and the peace of heaven will be all the more grateful and blessed when we go up to it from such a scene of conflict and war.

PSALM CXXI.

This psalm is entitled simply, "A Song of Degrees." See Notes on the title to Psalm cxx. Nothing is known, or can be known, of the author or of the occasion on which it was composed. De Wette and Rosenmüller suppose that it was composed in the exile; Rosenmüller regarding it as a psalm to be sung on the return to Palestine after the captivity,—De Wette, as the psalm of a pensive exile looking toward the hills of Palestine, his native land, as the source from whence all his help must come,—and expressing confidence in God that he would bring him out of his exile and his trouble. There is no *proof*, however, that either of these suppositions is correct. The language is such, indeed, as *might* then be employed, but it is also such as might be used on many other occasions. It might be the language of the leader of an army, endangered, and looking to the "hills" where he expected reinforcements; it might be that of a pious man encompassed with dangers, and using this expression as illustrative of his looking up to God; or it might be the language of one looking directly to heaven, represented as the heights, or the exalted place where God dwells; or it might be the language of one looking to the hills of Jerusalem—the seat of the worship of God—the place of His abode—as his refuge, and as the place from whence only help could come. This last seems to me to be the most probable supposition; and thus the psalm represents the confidence and hope of a pious man (in respect to duty, danger, or trial) as derived from the God whom he worships,—and the place where God has fixed his abode,—the church where he manifests himself to men.

1. *I will lift up mine eyes.* Marg., *Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? Whence should my help come?* The expression would properly denote a condition where there was danger; when no help or aid was visible; and when the eyes were turned to the quarter from which help might be expected to come. What the danger was cannot now be ascertained. ¶ *Unto the hills.* Heb., *the mountains.* To the quarter from whence I look for assistance. This (as has been shown in the Introduction) may refer (1) to the mountains whence one in danger expected help; or (2) to heaven, considered as high, and as the abode of God; or (3) to the hills on which Jerusalem was built, as the place where God dwelt, and from whence aid was expected. The third of these is the most probable. The first would be applicable to a state of war only, and the second is forced and unnatural. Adopting the *third* interpretation, the language is natural, and makes it proper to be used at all times, since it indicates a proper looking to God as he manifests himself to men, particularly in the church. ¶ *From whence cometh my help.* A more literal rendering would be, "Whence cometh my help?" This accords best with the usage of the

2 My [a] help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

3 He [b] will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he [c] that keepeth thee will not slumber.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD *is* thy keeper; the LORD *is* thy shade [d] upon thy right hand.

6 The [e] sun shall not smite

a Hosea xiii. 9.
b 1 Sam. ii. 9; Prov. iii. 25, 26.
c Isa. xxvii. 3.
d Isa. xxv. 4.
e Isa. xlix. 10; Rev. vii. 16.

Hebrew word, and agrees well with the connexion. It indicates a troubled and anxious state of mind—a mind that asks, *Where* shall I look for help? The answer is found in the following verse.

2. *My help* cometh *from the* LORD. From Jehovah. This is the answer to the anxious inquiry in ver. 1. It indicates (*a*) a consciousness that help *could* come only from God; (*b*) a belief that it *would* come from him; and a confident yet humble reliance on him. ¶ *Which made heaven and earth.* The great Creator of the universe. He must, therefore, be able to protect me. The Creator of all can defend all.

3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* He will enable you to stand firm. You are safe in his protection. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxviii. 16. This, with the remainder of the psalm, seems to be of the nature of an answer to the anxious question in ver. 1,—an answer which the author of the psalm, in danger and trouble, makes to his own soul, imparting confidence to himself. ¶ *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.* He will be ever watchful and wakeful. Comp. Isa. xxvii. 3. All *creatures*, as far as we know, sleep; God never sleeps. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. 11, 12. His eyes are upon us by day, and in the darkness of the night—the night literally; and also the night of calamity, woe, and sorrow.

4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel.* The Keeper—the Guardian—of his people. The psalmist here passes from his own particular case to a *general* truth—a truth to him full of consolation. It is, that the people of God must always be safe; that their great Guardian never slumbers; and that he, as one of his people, might, therefore, confidently look for his protecting care. ¶ *Shall neither slumber nor sleep.* Never slumbers, never ceases to be watchful. Man sleeps; a sentinel *may* slumber on his post, by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot *may* slumber at the helm; even a mother *may* fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the wants of the world.

5. *The* LORD is *thy keeper.* Thy Preserver; thy Defender. He will keep thee from danger; he will keep thee from sin; he will keep thee unto salvation. ¶ *The* LORD is *thy shade.* The Lord is as a shadow:—as the shadow of a rock, a house, or a tree, in the intense rays of the burning sun. See Notes on Isa. xxv. 4. ¶ *Upon thy right hand.* See Ps. xvi. 8; cix. 31. Perhaps the particular allusion to *the right hand* here may be that that was the place of a protector. He would thus be at hand, or would be ready to interpose in defence of him whom he was to guard. It is *possible*, however, that the idea here may be derived from the fact that in Scripture the geographer is represented as looking to the east, and not towards the north, as with us. Hence the south is always spoken of as the *right*, or at the right hand (comp. Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 12); and as the intense rays of the sun are from the south, the idea may be, that God would be as a shade in the direction from which those burning rays came.

6. *The sun shall not smite thee by*

thee by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The [f] LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve thy [g] going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

f 2 Tim. iv. 18. *g* Deut. xxviii. 6; Prov. ii. 8.

day. The Septuagint renders this, "shall not *burn* thee"—*συγκαύσει.* So the Latin Vulgate. The Hebrew word means to smite, to strike, as with a rod or staff, or with the plague or pestilence; and then, to kill, to slay. The allusion here is to what is now called a "sun-stroke"—the effect of the burning sun on the brain. Such effects of the sun are often fatal now, as doubtless they were in the time of the psalmist. ¶ *Nor the moon by night.* The psalmist here refers to some prevalent opinion about the influence of the moon, as endangering life or health. Some have supposed that he refers to the sudden cold which follows the intense heat of the day in Oriental countries, and which, because the moon rules the night, as the sun does the day, is either poetically or literally attributed to the moon. Lackmann and Michaelis suppose that there is some allusion to the influence of the moon in producing various kinds of disease, and especially *lunacy*—an idea which gave origin to that name. Comp. Notes on Matt. iv. 24. See Matt. xvii. 15; Mark ix. 17; Luke ix. 39. Knapp supposes the idea is, that from the moon's not giving a clear and full light like the sun, travellers trusting to its guidance may be led into rivers or quagmires. Macrobius refers to a custom among the Orientals of covering the faces of children when asleep, from some imagined effect of the moon on the health of the child. Andersen (Orient. Reise-Beschreib. i. 8) refers to an effect, which he says is common, and which he had often seen, of sleeping in the moon-beams, of making the neck stiff, so that it could not be turned from side to side as before. See Rosenmüller, *Morgenland, in loc.* Others have supposed that the allusion is to the effect of the moon, and of sleeping under the open air, in producing ophthalmia—a disease very common in the East,—an effect guarded against by covering the face. The influence of the moon, in producing madness or disease,—the general influence of it on health,—is often referred to. Thus Shakspeare says:—

> "The moon, the governess of floods,
> Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
> That rheumatic diseases do abound."
> *Midsummer Night's Dream,* ii. 2.

> "It is the very error of the moon;
> She comes more near the earth than she was wont,
> And makes men mad."
> *Othello,* v. 2.

Some of these things are evidently purely imaginary. The true idea seems to be that there were effects to be dreaded from the sudden changes from the heat of day to the cold of night, and that these effects were attributed to the moon. See Gen. xxxi. 40. The meaning is, that God would be a Protector alike in the dangers of the day and of the night.

7. *The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil.* This is an advance of the thought. The psalmist had in the previous verses specified some particular evils from which he says God would keep those who put their trust in him. He now makes the remark general, and says that God would not only preserve from these particular evils, but would keep those who trusted in him from *all* evil:—he would be their Protector in *all* the perils of life. ¶ *He shall preserve thy soul.* Thy life. See Ps. xli. 2; xcvii. 10.

8. *The* LORD *shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.* Preserve thee in going out and coming in; in going from thy dwelling, and returning to it; in going from home and coming back; that is, every-

PSALM CXXII.

A Song of degrees of David.

I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let [h] us go into the house of the LORD.

[h] Isa. ii. 2, 3; Jer. l. 5; Zec. viii. 21.

where, and at all times. Comp. Deut. xxviii. 6. See Notes also on Job v. 24. ¶ *From this time forth, and even for evermore.* Through this life and for ever. This is the gracious assurance which is made to all who put their trust in God. At home and abroad; in the house, in the field, and by the way; on the land and on the ocean; in their native country and in climes remote; on earth, in the grave, and in the eternal world, they are always safe. No evil that will endanger their salvation can befal them; nothing can happen to them here but what God shall see to be conducive to their ultimate good; and in the heavenly world they shall be safe for ever from every kind of evil, for in that world there will be no sin, and consequently no need of *discipline* to prepare them for the future.

"In foreign realms, and lands remote,
Supported by thy care,
Through burning climes they pass unhurt,
And breathe in tainted air.
When by the dreadful tempest borne,
High on the broken wave,
They know thou art not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.
The storm is laid—the winds retire,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roars at thy command,
At thy command is still.
In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness we'll adore;
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,
And humbly hope for more.
Our life, while thou preserv'st that life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, when death shall be our lot,
Shall join our souls to thee."

Addison's Spec.

PSALM CXXII.

This psalm is expressly ascribed to David, though it is not known why it should be classed among the "Songs of Degrees." On the supposition that these were used by the pilgrims in "going up" to Jerusalem to worship, and that they were sung by the way, this psalm would be particularly appropriate, and is one of the very few, in the entire collection of fifteen, that would be appropriate. This psalm evidently *was* used on some such occasion, and is beautifully suited to such a design. There is no reason to doubt that it is a composition of David, but it is not now possible to ascertain at what period of his life, or on what particular occasion, it was composed. De Wette has endeavoured to show that the psalm must have been composed at a later period in the Jewish history than the time of David. His arguments are—(1) That these "Psalms of Degrees" mostly pertain to a later period, and yet that they are closely connected together in sense; (2) that the language indicates a later period than the time of David; (3) that the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not instituted until a later age than that of David; (4) that the mention of the "thrones of the house of David" (ver. 5) indicates a later age; and (5) that Jerusalem is represented (ver. 3) as a city already built,—probably, as De Wette thinks, referring to Jerusalem as *rebuilt* after the captivity. It will be found, however, in the exposition of the psalm, that there is no part of it which is not applicable to David and his times.

1. *I was glad.* It was a subject of joy to me. The return of the happy season when we were to go up to worship filled me with joy. The language is expressive of the happiness which is felt by those who love God and his sanctuary, when the stated season of worship returns. The heart is drawn to the house of prayer; the soul is filled with peace at the prospect of being again permitted to worship God. *Who* the speaker here is, is not known. It *may* have been David himself; more probably, however, it was designed by him to be used by those who should go up to worship, as expressive of their individual joy. ¶ *When they said unto me.* When it was said unto me. When the time arrived. When I was invited by others to go. The announcement was joyful; the in-

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:
4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

vitation was welcome. It met the desires of my heart, and I embraced the invitation cheerfully and joyfully. ¶ *Let us go into the house of the* LORD. Up to the place where God dwells; the house which he has made his abode. If the psalm was composed in the time of David, this would refer to the tabernacle as fixed by him on Mount Zion; if at a later period, to the temple. The *language* will admit of either interpretation. Comp. Notes on Isa. ii. 3.

2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* We shall enter the sacred city. It appears now in full view before us,—its walls, its palaces, its sacred places. We shall not stand and gaze upon it at a distance; we shall not merely be charmed with its beauty as we approach it; we shall accomplish the object of our desire, and enter within its walls and gates. So the believer approaches heaven—the New Jerusalem above. He will not merely admire its exterior, and look upon it at a distance; but he will enter in. He draws nearer and nearer to it, and as he approaches it when he is dying, its beauty becomes the more charming to his view, and the joy of his heart increases as he now feels the assurance that he will "stand within its gates:" —that he will enter there, and dwell there for ever. So said Dr. Payson, when approaching the end of life:— "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere, —pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm." Works, i. 407. See also the exquisite description of the glories of heaven, familiar to all, as described by Bunyan, as the Christian pilgrims were about to cross the river of death.

3. *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.* Literally, "joined to itself together;" that is, when one part is, as it were, bound closely to another part; not scattered or separate. The walls are all joined together; and the houses are all united to one another so as to make a compact place. The ground occupied by Jerusalem never could be large, as it was surrounded with valleys, except on the north, and hemmed in with hills, so that, from the necessity of the case, when it became the capital of the nation, it was densely crowded. This, moreover, was usual in ancient cities, when they were made compact for the sake of defence and protection.

4. *Whither the tribes.* The twelve tribes of the children of Israel. ¶ *Go up.* To the great feasts and festivals of the nation. See Ex. xxiii. 17. This language of *going up* is such as would be used anywhere respecting the capital of a nation,— as it is now of London; but it was literally true of Jerusalem, since it was elevated far above most parts of the land. ¶ *The tribes of the* LORD, *unto the testimony of Israel.* The "*ark* of testimony;" the ark within, which were the tables of stone, containing the law considered as God's

5 For [i] there [1] are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

[i] Deut. xvii. 8, 9; 2 Chron. xix. 8.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

[1] *do sit.*

testimony or *witnessing* as to justice, right, equity, duty, truth. See Ex. xvi. 34; xxv. 16, 21; xl. 3, 20; xxx. 6, 36; xxxi. 18. ¶ To *give thanks unto the name of the* LORD. To worship Jehovah,—the *name* often being put for the Being himself. A main part of Hebrew worship was *praise*, and hence this is often put for the whole of worship.

5. *For there are set.* Marg., *Do sit.* The Hebrew is, "For there sit thrones for judgment." They are established there; or, That is the appointed place for administering justice. ¶ *Thrones of judgment.* Seats for dispensing justice. The word *throne* is now commonly appropriated to the seat or chair of a king, but this is not necessarily the meaning here. The word may denote a seat or bench occupied by a judge. The meaning here is, that Jerusalem was the supreme seat of justice; the place where justice was dispensed for the nation. It was at once the religious and the civil capital of the nation. ¶ *The thrones of the house of David.* Of the family of David, who performed the office of magistrates, or who administered justice. The family of David would naturally be employed in such a service as this. This office Absalom—who had not been appointed to it—earnestly desired, in order that he might secure popularity in his contemplated rebellion. "Oh that I were made a judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" 2 Sam. xv. 4.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* The prosperity, the welfare of Jerusalem,—for peace is everywhere the image of prosperity and happiness. Comp. Ps. li. 18. This is the language which those who were going up to the city—to the house of the Lord—addressed to each other, expressing the joyful feelings of their hearts at their own near approach to the city. It breathes the desire that all would pray for the peace and prosperity of a city so dear to their own souls; where the worship of God was celebrated; where God himself dwelt; where justice was administered:—a city of so much importance and so much influence in the land. To us now it inculcates the duty of praying for the church:—its peace; its unity; its prosperity; its increase; its influence on our country and on the world at large. It is a prayer that the church may not be divided by schism or heresy; that its members may cherish for each other right feelings; that there may be no jealousies, no envyings, and no jars; that the different branches of the church may regard and treat each other with kindness, with respect, and with mutual recognition; that prosperity may attend them all. ¶ *They shall prosper that love thee.* Or rather, They shall have peace that love thee; or, May they have peace that love thee. The word *prosper* conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means *to be secure, tranquil, at rest*, spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity, Job iii. 26; xii. 6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion *will* have peace; or, that the tendency of that love is to produce peace. See Rom. v. 1. The prayer was for "peace;" the thought in connexion with that was naturally that those who loved Zion *would* have peace. It is indeed true, in general, that they who love Zion, or who serve God, *will* "prosper" (comp. Notes on 1 Tim. iv. 8), but that is not the truth taught here. The idea is that

7 Peace be within thy walls, *and* prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.
9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek [k] thy good.

[k] Neh. ii. 10.

they will have *peace:*—peace with God; peace in their own consciences; peace in the prospect of death and of the future world; peace amidst the storms and tempests of life; peace in death, in the grave, and for ever.

7. *Peace be within thy walls.* The word here rendered *walls,* means properly an host, an army; then a fortification, an entrenchment, especially the ditch or trench with the low wall or *breastwork* which surrounds it. *Gesenius,* Lex. It refers here to the fortifications or defences around Jerusalem. ¶ And *prosperity.* Peace; —the same word which is used in the previous verse, and expressing the same idea—that of tranquillity. ¶ *Within thy palaces.* This word properly means a *fortress, castle;* then, a palace, a residence of a king or a prince, 1 Kings xvi. 18; 2 Kings xv. 25; Isa. xxv. 2. The idea is, that such places abounded in Jerusalem; and the prayer is, that in those abodes of power, where the rulers of the land resided, there might be peace. The particular reason for this prayer is suggested in the following verse.

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes.* Because they dwell there; or, because they go up there to worship; or, because they love thee, and find their happiness in thee; or, because they are unconverted, and all my hope of their salvation is to be derived from thee,—from the church, from the influence of religion. ¶ *I will now say, Peace* be *within thee.* I will pray for thy peace, for thy prosperity, for the blessing of God upon thee,—because their good, their comfort, their hope of salvation, depends on thee, — on the influence which shall go out from thee. So the Christian prays that the church may prosper,—that the Divine blessing may rest upon it,—that there may be in it harmony, peace, love, and zeal,—that a blessing may attend the preaching of the gospel,—not only because *he* loves it, and seeks his own comfort and edification in it, but that his friends and kindred—his wife, his parents, his children, his neighbours—those whom he loves, and whose salvation he desires, may be saved. This expresses the true feelings of piety all over the world; this is one of the grounds of the strong love which the friends of God have for the church,—because they hope and desire that through the church those most dear to their hearts will find salvation.

9. *Because of the house of the* LORD *our God I will seek thy good.* Because of the sanctuary within thee; because that is the place where God is worshipped. The principal attraction in thee is the fact that in thee is the place where the worship of God is celebrated. It is this which gives its main importance in my view to the place; it is for this, and because I desire its influence to be perpetuated and extended, that I seek thy prosperity. This expresses a deep feeling in the mind of a pious man. To him the church of God is the most important of all objects, gives the principal interest to a place, and is everywhere to him the chief attraction. The church does more to adorn a place than anything else; it is that which exerts the best influence on a place, and sends the best influence abroad; it is that which to him is the source of chief comfort and delight. His heart is there; his main delight is there; his arrangements will be made so as best to enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary; and his plans of life will all contemplate the welfare, the extension, and

PSALM CXXIII.

A Song of degrees.

UNTO thee [i] lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her

[i] Ps. cxxi. 1.

the influence of the church of God. It is *religion* which in his view is the chief ornament of a place; religion which in any community is the principal fountain of its happiness and prosperity; religion which is the central and controlling influence on the private dwellings, and the public institutions, of a nation.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm is entitled simply "A Song of Degrees." See Notes on the title of Psalm cxx. Nothing is intimated in regard to the authorship of the psalm, or to the occasion on which it was composed. The only circumstance which throws any light on its origin is the statement in ver. 4, that the author and his friends—the people of God referred to in the psalm—were exposed to derision and contempt for their attachment to religion, especially the contempt and reproach of those who were in circumstances of ease and affluence, or who were in the more elevated ranks of life. This might accord well with the condition of the exiles returning from Babylon, or with the condition of the returned captives when rebuilding the walls of the city, and when they met with scorn and contempt from the Samaritans and the Ammonites; from Sanballat and Tobiah; from the Arabians and the Ashdodites (Neh. iv. 1-8); but there is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed on that occasion. The pious Hebrews of antiquity—David and others—and the people of God at all times have been too much exposed to this kind of treatment to make the mere applicability of the psalm to that particular time a reason for concluding that it *must* have been composed then; and it is now impossible to determine by whom, or on what occasion it was composed. It refers to what may occur in any age of the world; and it expresses the proper feelings of piety at all times when we are, on account of our religion, exposed to "the scorning of those that are at ease, and to the contempt of the proud."

1. *Unto thee.* To God. ¶ *Lift I up mine eyes.* In supplication and prayer. Nature prompts us to *look up* when we address God, as if he dwelt *above* us. It is the natural prompting of the heart that he must be the most exalted of all beings, dwelling above all. See Ps. cxxi. 1. ¶ *O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* Whose home—whose peculiar abode—is in heaven—above the sky. This is in accordance with the common feelings of men, and the common description of God in the Bible, though it is true also that God is everywhere. Comp. Ps. ii. 4; xi. 4.

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants* look *unto the hand of their masters,* etc. Or, *are* to the hands of their masters; or, regard the hands of their masters. That is, we look to God with the same spirit of deference, dependence, and readiness to mark the will of God, which is evinced by servants in regard to their masters, and by maidens in regard to the will of a mistress. There has been some difference of view in regard to the meaning of this comparison. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the fact that servants, when in danger, look to their masters for protection; others, that they look to them for the supply of their wants; others, that when they have been guilty of an offence they look to them alone for pardon. See Rosenmüller, *in loc.* The true idea, however, seems to be, that they look to them with deference and respect; that they attentively mark every expression of their will; that they are ready to obey their commands on the slightest intimation of their wishes—standing in a waiting posture, with no will of their own,—their own wills absorbed in the will of the master or the mistress. The following extracts from Oriental tra-

mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

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vellers may illustrate the idea here:—Maundrell (Reise von Aleppo nach Jerusalem, s. 13), speaking of an interview with the Pasha at Tripoli, says, "The servants all stood in great numbers with the utmost respect, and in profoundest silence, and served the guests with the utmost attention and respect." Pococke remarks that in Egypt the slaves stand in the profoundest silence at the end of the table, their hands laid cross-wise over one another, and that they mark with the deepest attention the slightest movement of their master, who conveys his wishes to them through signs and winks. Savary, in his Letters from Egypt (p. 135), says, "The slaves stand with their hands laid cross-wise over their breasts, silent, at the end of the hall. *Their eyes are directed to the master*, and they are attentive to the slightest indication of his will." See other illustrations in Rosenmüller, Morgenland, ii. 109, 110. It is to such a custom as this that the psalmist refers; and the idea is, that his eyes were directed to God, in his troubles, in profound silence, and with deep attention, resembling that of servants waiting in stillness on their master, and catching the slightest intimation of his will—a movement of the head or hand—or anything which would indicate his pleasure. ¶ *Until that he have mercy upon us.* We have nothing to do but wait. We have no other resource. We can do nothing if we turn away from him. Our only hope and expectation is there, and if we ever find relief, it must be there. The surest—the only—hope of relief is to wait on God; and it is the purpose of our souls to do this until we find help and deliverance. This is the attitude in which the earnest prayer in the next verse is offered.

3. *Have mercy upon us, O* LORD, *have mercy upon us.* The language of earnest pleading, repeating with emphasis the object of the prayer. The supplicants are represented as standing and urging this petition, feeling that help could come only from God; looking only to him; and watching his countenance, as servants do their master's. ¶ *For we are exceedingly filled.* The Hebrew word here used means *to be saturated;* to have the appetite fully satisfied—as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be;—they could experience no more. ¶ *With contempt.* Contempt has been shown us in every possible way. We are thoroughly despised.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled.* Thoroughly sated. This verse states the *nature* and the *source* of the contempt which they were called to bear. ¶ *With the scorning of those that are at ease.* According to one view of these "Psalms of Degrees" (see Introd. to Ps. cxx.) this would be an instance of an "*ascent*" in the sense, or of the *going up* of the thought, where in ver. 3 there was mention made in general of "*contempt*," and in this verse the thought is carried onward and upward, or there is an additional idea which gives intensity to it. It is the scorn proceeding from those who are at ease; that is, the gay, the affluent, the proud. The word *scorning* means derision, mockery. The idea in the Hebrew is derived from stammering, which the word properly means; and then, mockery, as repeating over the words of another, or imitating the voice of one in derision. Comp. Ps. ii. 4; Job xxii. 19. The

PSALM CXXIV.

A Song of degrees of David.

IF *m it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

m Ex. xv. 1, etc.

phrase "those that are at ease" properly refers to those who are tranquil or quiet, Job xii. 5; Isa. xxxii. 18; xxxiii. 20; and then it is used of those who are living at ease; those who are living in self-indulgence and luxury, Amos vi. 1; Isa. xxxii. 9, 11. Here it would seem to refer to those who, in our language, are "in easy circumstances;" the affluent; those who are not compelled to toil:—then, the gay, the fashionable, those in the upper walks of life. The contempt was aggravated by the fact that it came from that quarter; not from the low, the ignorant, the vulgar, but from those who claimed to be refined, and who were distinguished in the world of gaiety, of rank, and of fashion. This, even for good people (such is human nature), is much more hard to bear than contempt is when it comes from those who are in the lower walks of life. In the latter case, perhaps, we feel that we can meet contempt with contempt; in the former we cannot. We disregard the opinions of those who are beneath us; there are few who are not affected by the opinions entertained of them by those who are above them. ¶ And *with the contempt of the proud.* Those who are lifted up; either in rank, in condition, or in feeling. The essential idea is, that it was the contempt of those to whom mankind *look up.* Religious people have always had much of this to encounter, and often it is in fact a more severe test of the reality and power of religion than the loss of goods, or than bodily pains and penalties. We can bear much if we have the respect—the praise—of those above us; it is a very certain test of the reality and the power of our religion when we can bear the scorn of the great, the noble, the scientific, the gay, and the fashionable. Piety is more frequently checked and obscured by this than it is by persecution. It is more rare that piety shines brightly when the gay and the fashionable frown upon it than when princes attempt to crush it by power. The church has performed its duty better in the furnace of persecution than it has in the gay scenes of the world.

PSALM CXXIV.

This psalm, one of the *Songs of Degrees*, is, like Ps. cxxii., ascribed to David. See the Introductory Notes to that psalm. There is nothing in the one before us to render it improbable that it was composed by him, but it is now impossible to ascertain on what occasion it was written. It would be appropriate to be sung on the return from Babylon, and there is no improbability in the supposition that it may have been *used* on that occasion. But there is nothing in it to prove that it was composed then, or to make it applicable to that occasion alone. Very many were the occasions in the Jewish history when such a psalm was applicable; very many have been the occasions in the history of the Christian church; very many, also, in the lives of individual believers.

The *idea* in the psalm is, that deliverance from trouble and danger is to be ascribed wholly to God; that the people of God are often in such circumstances that there is no human help for them, and that the praise of their deliverance is due to God alone.

1. *If* it had not been *the* LORD *who was on our side.* Unless it was Jehovah who was with us. The idea is, that some one had been with them, and had delivered them, and that such was the nature of the interposition that it could be ascribed to no one but Jehovah. It bore unmistakeable evidence that it was his work. The deliverance was of such a kind that it could have been accomplished by him only. Such things often occur in life, when the intervention in our behalf is so remarkable that we *can* ascribe it to no one else but God.

2 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us;

3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:

¶ *Now may Israel say.* May well and truly say. The danger was so great, their helplessness was so manifest, and the deliverance was so clearly the work of God, that it was proper to say that *if* this had not occurred, ruin would have been inevitable and entire.

2. *If* it had not been *the* LORD *who was on our side.* Repeating the idea, since the mind was full of it, and carrying the thought forward. This is one of the instances of an *ascent* of thought in these psalms, from which it has been supposed that the title "Songs of *Degrees*" was given to this collection. See, however, Introd. to Ps. cxx. ¶ *When men rose up against us.* When we were assailed by our enemies. On what occasion this occurred, it is now impossible to determine.

3. *Then they had swallowed us up quick.* There was no other help, and ruin—utter ruin—would have soon come upon us. The word *quick* here means *alive;* and the idea is derived from persons swallowed up in an earthquake, or by the opening of the earth, as in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Num. xvi. 32, 33. Comp. Ps. cvi. 17. The meaning here is, that they would have been destroyed *as if* they were swallowed up by the opening of the earth; that is, there would have been *complete* destruction. ¶ *When their wrath was kindled against us.* Heb., In the kindling of their wrath against us. Wrath is often represented in the Scriptures as *burning* or *heated*—as that which consumes all before it.

4. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us.* Our destruction would have been *as if* the waves of the ocean had overwhelmed us. ¶ *The stream had gone over our soul.* The torrent would have swept us away. Comp. Ps. xviii. 4, 16.

5. *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* Over us. The word *proud* here is applied to the waters as if raging, swelling, rolling, tumultuous; as if they were self-confident, arrogant, haughty. Such raging billows, as they break and dash upon the shore, are a striking emblem of human passions, whether in an individual, or in a gathering of men—as an army, or a mob. Comp. Ps. lxv. 7. This is again an amplification, or an *ascent* of thought. See Notes on ver. 2. It is, however, nothing more than a poetical embellishment, adding intensity to the expression.

6. *Blessed be the* LORD. The Lord be praised; or, We have reason to praise the Lord because we have been delivered from these calamities. ¶ *Who hath not given us* as *a prey to their teeth.* The figure is here changed, though the same idea is retained. The image is now that of destruction by wild beasts—a form of destruction not less fearful than that which comes from overflowing waters. Such changes of imagery constantly occur in the Book of Psalms, and in impassioned poetry everywhere. The mind is full of a subject; numerous illustrations occur in the rapidity of thought; and the mind seizes upon one and then upon another as best fitted to express the emotions of the soul. The next verse furnishes another instance of this sudden transition.

7. *Our soul is escaped.* We have escaped; our life has been preserved. ¶ *As a bird out of the snare of the*

the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

8 Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

PSALM CXXV.

A Song of degrees.

THEY that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which* cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.

fowlers. By the breaking of the snare, or the gin. The bird is entangled, but the net breaks, and the bird escapes. See Notes on Ps. xci. 3. ¶ *The snare is broken,* etc. It was not strong enough to retain the struggling bird, and the captive broke away. So we seemed to be caught. The enemy appeared to have us entirely in his power, but escape came to us as it does to the bird when it finds the net suddenly break, and itself again at large.

8. *Our help* is *in the name of the* LORD. In the Lord; in the great Jehovah. See Ps. cxxi. 2. ¶ *Who made heaven and earth.* The great Creator; the true God. Our deliverances have led us up to him. They are such as can be ascribed to him alone. They could not have come from ourselves; from our fellow-men; from angels; from any or all created beings. Often in life, when delivered from danger, we may feel this; we always may feel this, and should feel this, when we think of the redemption of our souls. That is a work which we of ourselves could never have performed; which could not have been wrought for us by our fellow-men; which no angel could have accomplished; which all creation combined could not have wrought out; which could have been effected by no one but by him who "made heaven and earth;" by him who created all things. See Col. i. 13–17.

PSALM CXXV.

This psalm is entitled merely "A Song of Degrees." Its author, and the occasion on which it was composed, are unknown. The contents of the psalm accord well with the supposition that it may have been written after the return from the Babylonish captivity, and may have been designed to strengthen and comfort those who were engaged in rebuilding the city, and restoring the ancient worship, either against the Samaritans and those who opposed them (Neh. vi. 12, 13), or against the lukewarmness of a part of the people themselves. There is nothing, however, so exclusively applicable to that time as to make it *necessary* to suppose that it was composed on that occasion. There is, indeed, evidence in the psalm (ver. 5), that there were some among the people who were disposed to turn away from the service of Jehovah, or who were perverse and rebellious; but such a state of things was not peculiar to the time of the return from the captivity, nor was it peculiar to the Jews, for it has occurred often; it exists still. The psalm is designed to encourage those who were disposed to trust in the Lord, by the assurance that they would be safe; that the blessing of God would be upon them; and that the church was firm and secure.

1. *They that trust in the* LORD. His people; his friends. It is, and has been always, a characteristic of the people of God that they *trust* or *confide* in him. ¶ Shall be *as mount Zion.* The mountain which David fortified, and on which the city was at first built, 2 Sam. v. 6-9. The name *Zion* became also the name by which the entire city was known. ¶ Which *cannot be removed,* but *abideth for ever.* A mountain is an emblem of firmness and stability; and it is natural to speak of it as that which could not be removed. There is something more than this, however, intended here, as there is some ground of comparison *peculiarly* in regard to Mount Zion. This must have been either the idea that Zion was particularly strong by position, or that it was under the Divine protection, and was therefore safe. Most

2 *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, so the LORD *is* round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

3 For the rod of [1] the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest [n] the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

[1] *wickedness.* [n] 1 Cor. x. 13.

probably it refers to Zion as a place secure by nature, and rendered more so by art.

2. As *the mountains* are *round about Jerusalem.* Heb., "Jerusalem — the mountains are round about her." Jerusalem, except on the north, is encompassed with hills or mountains, so that although the city was built on hills — Zion, Moriah, Bezethah, Acra,—it was itself surrounded by hills higher than any of these, and was, in a certain sense, in a valley. See Notes on Matt. ii. 1. Comp. Notes on Ps. xlviii. ¶ *So the* LORD is *round about his people,* etc. As Jerusalem is thus protected by the hills around, so the people of God are protected by Jehovah. He surrounds the church; he is exalted far above the church; he guards the approaches to the church; he can defend it from all its foes. Under his protection it is safe. Jerusalem, as surrounded by hills and mountains, has thus become an *emblem* of the church at all times; its security was an emblem of the security of all who trust in the Lord.

3. *For the rod of the wicked.* Marg., as in Heb., *wickedness.* The word "rod,"—the staff, the sceptre, the instrument of inflicting punishment,—here means dominion, power, that condition in which the wicked are commonly found, as one of prosperity or power. God will not deal with the righteous as the wicked are often dealt with:—that is, God will not give his people prosperity as he does them. The righteous will be afflicted, and will be placed in circumstances to keep them from putting forth their hands to iniquity; that is, from indulging in iniquity. They will be afflicted; they will be kept in the ways of virtue and religion by trial; they will not be left to act out the depravity of the heart as the wicked are. ¶ *Shall not rest upon.* Permanently abide; or, be the constant condition of the righteous. They *may* be prospered, but they must expect that there will be changes, and that God will so deal with them as to keep them from putting forth their hands to iniquity. ¶ *The lot of the righteous.* The righteous, considered as the "lot" or portion of the Lord. The *language* is derived from dividing a land by *lot* (comp. Ps. cv. 11; lxxiv. 2); and the idea is, that the "lot" pertaining to the Lord, or his "portion" among men, is the righteous. ¶ *Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* Lest the effect of prosperity should be to lead them away from God,—like the wicked. Hence they are dealt with in a different manner. They are afflicted; they are thus kept under proper discipline, and their hearts and lives are made what they should be. The statement in this verse, therefore, accords with the uniform statements in the Scriptures, that prosperity is dangerous to the spiritual interests of men, and that, therefore, men are often afflicted in order that they may be led to seek higher interests than those which pertain to this life. The *connexion* here seems to be, that God will defend his people, even as Jerusalem was defended by hills and mountains; but that the *real* welfare and prosperity of his people was not what the wicked seek—wealth and honour, — but the favour of the Lord. Another meaning may, however, be suggested in regard to this verse, which to some may appear more probable than the one above. It is this:—that the "rod"—the dominion of the wicked — of bad rulers — of a harsh and oppressive

4 Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good, and to *them that are* upright in their hearts.

5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: *but* peace [o] *shall be* upon Israel.

o Gal. vi. 16.

government—will not *always* be upon the people of God, lest, being crushed, they should be led to acts of iniquity; or lest, being kept from the free service of God, they should abandon themselves to sin.

4. *Do good, O* LORD, *unto* those that be *good*, etc. To the good; to the pious. Let them be under the Divine protection. Possibly this is not merely a prayer, but is expressive of the belief of the psalmist as to what *would* occur under the Divine administration — that the favour of God *would* rest upon his people.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* The wicked. Those who leave the right or straight path, and wander in forbidden ways. The word here rendered *crooked ways* occurs nowhere else except in Judges v. 6, where it is rendered *by-ways*,— meaning unfrequented paths or roads; narrow and crooked paths, remote from the highways, or the ways commonly traversed. Hence the word means also paths of sin — as deviations from the straight road which man should travel. ¶ *The* LORD *shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* They shall be dealt with *as* sinners. They shall be punished. The allusion is to backsliders; to those who forsake the worship of God; who cease to do "good;" who, though among the professed people of God, wander from him in by-paths and forbidden ways. The idea is, that their profession of religion will not save them; that they will not obtain the Divine blessing merely because they are avowedly the people of God, or are numbered among them, but that they will be treated as all other sinners are: — they will be led forth with all the wicked, and will be treated like them. Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13; Matt. vii. 22, 23; xxv. 11, 12. ¶ But *peace* shall be *upon Israel.* Upon the real Israel; upon the true people of God. Gal. vi. 16; Isa. liv. 13; lv. 12; lvii. 2; lxvi. 12; John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Eph. ii. 17; Phil. iv. 7.

PSALM CXXVI.

This psalm is entitled simply "A Song of Degrees." See the Introd. to Psalm cxx. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the occasion on which it was composed, for it bears internal evidence of having been composed with reference to the return from Babylon. It may have been designed to be sung as the returning captives went up to Jerusalem, but was more probably composed subsequently to that event, as designed to keep it in remembrance. It was evidently, however, written not long after the return, and by some one who had been personally interested in it, for the author manifestly, in describing the feelings of the people (vers. 1, 2), speaks of himself as one of them, or as participating in those feelings which they had when the exile was closed, and when they returned to their own land. Who the author was, it is in vain now to conjecture.

It is evident from the psalm (ver. 5), that, when it was composed, there was still some trouble, — something that might be called a "captivity,"—from which the psalmist prays that they might be delivered; and the object of the psalm would seem to be in part, in that trial to find encouragement from the former interposition of God in their case. As he *had* "turned the captivity of Zion," as he *had* filled their "mouth with laughter," so the psalmist prays that he would again interpose in similar circumstances, and renew his goodness. It is, of course, now impossible to determine precisely to what this refers. It may be, as Rosenmüller supposes, to a portion of the people who remained in exile; or it may be to some other captivity or danger to which they were exposed after their return. The psalmist,

PSALM CXXVI.

A Song of degrees.

WHEN the LORD [1] turned [p] again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath [2] done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad.

[1] *returned the returning.*

[p] Ps. liii. 6; lxxxv. 1.

[2] *magnified to do with them.*

however, expresses entire confidence that there would be such interposition, and that, though then in trouble, they would have joy, such as the farmer has who goes forth sowing his seed with weeping, and who comes with joy in the harvest, bearing his sheaves with him, vers. 5, 6.

1. *When the* LORD *turned again the captivity of Zion.* Marg., as in Heb., *returned the returning of Zion.* The Hebrew word which is rendered in the text *captivity* means properly *return;* and then, those returning. The ancient versions render it *captivity.* The reference clearly is to those who were returning to Zion, and the psalmist fixes his eye on them *as* returning, and immediately says that it was *the Lord* who had thus restored them. The whole was to be traced to God. ¶ *We were like them that dream.* The Latin Vulgate and the LXX. render this, "we were comforted." The meaning is, "It seemed like a dream; we could hardly realize that it was so; it was so marvellous, so good, so full of joy, that we could scarcely believe it was real." This state of mind is not uncommon, when, in sudden and overpowering joy, we ask whether it can be real; whether it is not all a dream. We *fear* that it is; we apprehend that it will all vanish away like a dream.

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter.* Then were we happy; completely happy. See Job viii. 21. ¶ *And our tongue with singing.* We expressed our joy in songs—the natural expression of joy. Young converts—those "*turned*" from sin to God—sing. Their feelings find expression in the songs of Zion. This is natural; this is proper; this *will* occur when sinners are converted. An assemblage of young converts is always a happy assemblage; a place where there is a "revival" of religion is always a happy place,—full of songs and singing. ¶ *Then said they among the heathen.* The nations; the people among whom they dwelt. ¶ *The* LORD *hath done great things for them.* In causing their return to their own land; in ordering the arrangements for it; in bringing their captivity to an end; in securing such interposition from the civil rulers as to facilitate their return. This would indicate that the surrounding people had not an unfriendly feeling towards them, but that they pitied them in exile, and were disposed to acknowledge the hand of God in what was done. Their deliverance, in the circumstances, was such as evidently to have been the work of God. This will agree well with the account of the return of the exiles from Babylon, and with all that had been done for them by Cyrus. Comp. Ezra i. 1–4.

3. *The* LORD *hath done great things for us.* All that the people around us say is true. We see it; we feel it; we acknowledge it. Those to whom this appertained would see it more clearly than those who had merely observed it. A surrounding world may see in the conversion of a man, in his being turned from sin, in the influence of religion upon him, in his comfort, calmness, and peace, that "the Lord has done great things" for him; but he himself, while he responds most fully to what they say, will see this more clearly than they do. There is more in his redemption, his conversion, his peace and joy, than they do or can perceive, and with emphasis he himself will say, "The

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

5 They [q] that sow in tears shall reap in [1] joy.

6 He that goeth forth and

[q] Jer. xxxi. 9—14.

[1] Or, *singing*.

LORD HAS done great things for me." ¶ Whereof *we are glad*. It fills our souls with joy. If this is understood of the returning Hebrews—coming back from the captivity in Babylon—all must see how appropriate is the language; if it be applied to a sinner returning to God, it is no less suitable, for there is nothing that so fills the mind with joy as a true conversion to God.

4. *Turn again our captivity, O* LORD. Literally, "Turn our captivity." The word "*again*" is inserted by the translators, and conveys an idea which is not necessarily in the original. It is simply a prayer that God would "turn" their captivity; *i. e.*, looking upon the captivity as not wholly ended, or as, in some sense, still continuing, that it might please him *wholly* to turn it, or to end it. The *language* would be applicable, if there was a new "captivity" similar to the one from which they had been delivered, or if the one mainly referred to was not complete; that is, if a part of the people still remained in bondage. The latter is probably the idea, that while a considerable part of the nation had been restored, and while an order had been issued for the restoration of all the captives to their native land, it was still true that a portion of them remained in exile; and the prayer is, that God would interfere in their behalf, and complete the work. A portion of the exiles, in fact, returned under Cyrus; a part under Darius; a part under Xerxes and his successors. The return was by no means accomplished at once, but occupied a succession of years. ¶ *As the streams in the south.* In the southern parts of Palestine, or in the regions bordering it on the south, —Idumea and Arabia. That is, As those streams when dried up by the summer heat are swelled by autumnal and winter rains, so let the streams of the returning people, which seem now to be diminished, be swelled by augmenting numbers coming again to their own land. Let the companies of returning emigrants be kept full, like swollen streams, until all shall have been brought back.

5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Though the sowing of seed is a work of labour and sorrow, —often a work so burdening the farmer that he weeps,—yet the return—the harvest—is accompanied with rejoicing. The truth is expressed in a general form, as illustrating the idea that enterprises which are begun under many difficulties, and which require much labour, will be crowned with success, and that the joy is more than an equivalent for all the weariness and sorrow. Thus it is in respect to the toil of the husbandman; the cares and anxieties of the student; the work of conversion and repentance; the labours of the Christian pastor; the efforts of the Sabbath-school teacher; the faithfulness of the Christian parent; the endeavours of a church for a revival of religion; the zeal and sacrifice of the Christian missionary. The particular allusion here is to the exiles, in their long and weary march to their native land. It was a work of toil and tears, but there would be joy, like that of the harvest, when, their long journey over they should again come to their native land. Comp. Isa. ix. 3.

6. *He that goeth forth and weepeth.* He that goes forth weeping—still an allusion to the farmer. He is seen moving slowly and sadly over the ploughed ground, burdened with his task, and in tears. ¶ *Bearing precious seed.* Marg., *seed-basket.* Literally, "bearing *the drawing out of seed;*" perhaps the seed as drawn out of his bag; or, as scattered or sown

weepeth, bearing [1] precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, [r] bringing his sheaves *with him*.

[1] Or, *seed-basket*.

[r] Ps. xxx. 5.

regularly in furrows, so that it seems to be *drawn out* in regular lines over the fields. ¶ *Shall doubtless come again.* Shall come to this sown field again in the time of harvest. He will visit it with other feelings than those which he now has. ¶ *With rejoicing*, etc. Then his tears will be turned to joy. Then the rich harvest will wave before him. Then he will thrust in his sickle and reap. Then he will gather the golden grain, and the wain will groan under the burden, and the sheaves will be carried forth with songs of joy. He will be abundantly rewarded for all his toil; he will see the fruit of his labours; he will be filled with joy. The design of this illustration was, undoubtedly, to cheer the hearts of the exiles in their long and dangerous journey to their native land; it has, however, a wider and more universal application, as being fitted to encourage all in their endeavours to secure their own salvation, and to do good in the world,—for the effort is often attended with sacrifice, toil, and tears. The joy of heaven will be more than a compensation for all this. The following remarks by Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. i., pp. 118, 119) will furnish an illustration of the meaning of this passage:—"I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance, copying the example, perhaps, of his great predecessor in Egypt when the seven years' famine was ended. The thoughts of this psalm may likewise have been suggested by the extreme danger which frequently attends the farmer in his ploughing and sowing. The calamity which fell upon the husbandmen of Job when the oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword (Job i. 14, 15), is often repeated in our day. To understand this, you must remember what I just told you about the situation of the arable lands in the open country; and here again we meet that verbal accuracy: the sower *goes forth*—that is, from the village. The people of Ibel and Khiem, in Merj 'Aiyûn, for example, have their best grain-growing fields down in the 'Ard Hûleh, six or eight miles from their homes, and just that much nearer the lawless border of the desert. When the country is disturbed, or the government weak, they cannot sow these lands except at the risk of their lives. Indeed, they always *go forth* in large companies, and completely armed, ready to drop the plough and seize the musket at a moment's warning; and yet, with all this care, many sad and fatal calamities overtake the men who must thus sow in tears. And still another origin may be found for the thoughts of the psalm in the extreme difficulty of the work itself in many places. The soil is rocky, impracticable, overgrown with sharp thorns; and it costs much painful toil to break up and gather out the rocks, cut and burn the briers, and to subdue the stubborn soil, especially with their feeble oxen and insignificant ploughs. Join all these together, and the sentiment is very forcibly brought out, that he who labours hard, in cold and in rain, in

PSALM CXXVII.

A Song of degrees [1] for Solomon.

EXCEPT [s] the LORD build the house, they labour in vain [2] that build it; except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

[1] Or, *of*; Ps. lxxii., *title.*
[s] 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.
[2] that are *builders of it in it.*

fear and danger, in poverty and in want, casting his precious seed in the ground, will surely come again, at harvest-time, with rejoicing, and bearing his sheaves with him."

PSALM CXXVII.

This psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees for Solomon;" in the margin, "Of Solomon." In the Syriac Version the title is, "From the Psalms of the Ascent; spoken by David concerning Solomon; it was spoken also of Haggai and Zechariah, who urged the rebuilding of the Temple." The meaning of the title may be either "*for* Solomon," or "*of* Solomon;" that is, it may have been either composed by him, or with reference to him. Many have supposed that it was written by David near the close of his life, and was designed to be a guide to Solomon, his successor, in regard to the principles which should govern him in his reign. There is nothing, however, in the title in the Hebrew which would indicate that it was composed by David; and there is nothing in the psalm which would seem to be *peculiarly* appropriate to address to a young monarch just entering on his reign, unless it was the mere fact of dependence on God. The allusion to children (vers. 3–5), beautiful and proper as it is, would seem to have no particular pertinency to an entrance on the administration of a government, and would not be the topic which would most naturally be suggested in such circumstances. The probability, therefore, is, that the psalm was composed *by* Solomon. On what occasion, however, it was written, it is now impossible to determine. The sentiments and style are such as agree well with the idea that Solomon was the author, and the whole psalm *might* have been introduced into the Book of Proverbs without any manifest discrepancy with the general character and style of that book. From the psalm itself it would seem that it was composed mainly with reference to one who was entering on domestic life, and that it was intended to set before such a one the views which ought to guide him, or the thoughts which ought to occur to him. Nothing could be more appropriate in such circumstances than the sentiments of the psalm:—I. The entire dependence on God for success, ver. 1. II. The vanity of all efforts—rising early, and sitting up late—without the Divine blessing, ver. 2. III. The fact that children belong to God, and are to be regarded as his, ver. 3. IV. The aid which children might be expected to render to a father in supporting or defending him, ver. 4. V. The comfort which he might expect to derive from them, and the honour which, being properly trained, they would reflect on him and on the family, ver. 5.

1. *Except the* LORD *build the house.* Or rather, "*a* house." The word *house* may refer either to an ordinary dwelling; to the temple, as a place of worship; or to a family, with reference to its success and prosperity, as the word *house* is often used now. The statement is universal, and is designed to indicate a universal dependence on God in human undertakings, though it is not improbable that there may have been an allusion, when the psalm was composed, to some building which was contemplated or commenced. If the psalm was a composition of David or Solomon, the allusion *may* have been to the temple about to be erected. The language, however, is so general as to be applicable to *any* enterprise of that kind. ¶ *They labour in vain that build it.* Literally, "In vain toil its builders in it." The idea is, that they are entirely dependent on God. No matter what their skill, their strength, their industry may be—all will be in vain unless God shall assist them. They are dependent on Him for life, for health, for strength, for practical wisdom, for a disposition to continue

2 *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat [t] the bread of sorrows: *for* so he giveth his beloved sleep.

[t] Gen. iii. 17, 19.

their work, and for success in it. Their work might be destroyed by fire, by a tempest, by an earthquake, or by an irruption of enemies; and for the result, therefore, they are entirely dependent on God. ¶ *Except the* LORD *keep the city.* The same idea of dependence is here repeated in another form. The preservation of a city depends wholly on God, whatever care or precaution may be used. ¶ *The watchman waketh* but *in vain.* Literally, "In vain waketh the keeper." The word rendered *waketh* means to be sleepless; and then, to watch. The allusion is to the watch or guard appointed to keep a city, and the idea is, that, whatever may be the diligence, the care, the fidelity of one thus appointed to guard a city, its safe-keeping must depend on God alone. Fires may break out in spite of the watchmen; a tempest may sweep over it; bands of armed men may assail it; or the pestilence may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation through its dwellings. There *may* have been an allusion in this to some immediate arrangement for guarding Jerusalem when the psalm was composed; but the remark is so general that it is not necessary to confine it to that. It is universally true that, after all the care for their own preservation which men can employ, their safety depends wholly on God.

2. It is *vain for you to rise up early.* The psalmist does not here say that it is improper to rise early; or that there could be *no* advantage in it; or that men would be more likely to be successful in their undertakings if they did *not* rise early; but that, although this was done, they would be still altogether dependent on God. *Mere* early rising, without his blessing, would not secure what they hoped to accomplish, for everything is still in the hand of God. Health, strength, clearness of mind, and success, are all under his control; and though early rising *may* tend to produce all these—as it *does* in fact—yet still men are not the less dependent on God for success. ¶ *To sit up late.* That you may labour or study. As in the former case the psalmist does not express any opinion about the propriety or impropriety of early rising, so it is in respect to this. He merely says that if it *is* done, this, of itself, will not accomplish the object; men are still dependent on God for success *though* they do it. As a matter of fact, however, sitting up late has *less* tendency to promote success in life than early rising; but in either case there is the same dependence on God. ¶ *To eat the bread of sorrows.* Bread of care, anxiety, or trouble; that is, bread earned or procured by the severity of toil. There may be an allusion here to the original sentence pronounced on man, Gen. iii. 17. The meaning is, that it is in vain that you labour hard, that you exhaust your strength, in order to get bread to eat, unless God shall bless you. After all your toil the result is with him. ¶ For *so he giveth his beloved sleep.* The word *"for"* is not in the original. The sentence is very obscure in the connexion in which it stands. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "Ye who eat the bread of care—rise when you have rested—when he hath given his beloved sleep." Some have supposed it to mean that God gives his people rest without toil,—or that, while others labour, his "beloved"—his friends—sleep; but this interpretation is not necessarily demanded by the Hebrew, and is inconsistent with the general doctrine of the Bible. Others have supposed the idea to be, that God gives his beloved rest *after* labour; but though this is true, it is not true of them peculiarly or exclusively.

3 Lo, children [u] *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

[u] Gen. xxxiii. 5; 1 Sam. ii. 5.

4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

5 Happy *is* the man that hath

Some suppose, with as little probability, that the meaning is, that what others hope (but hope in vain) to get by labour, the Lord bestows upon his people in sleep, they know not how. The meaning evidently is, that God bestows "sleep" upon his people in some sense in which it is *not* bestowed on others, or that there is, in regard to their case, something in which they differ from those who are so anxious and troubled,—who rise so early for the sake of gain,—who toil so late,—who eat the bread of care. The idea seems to be that there would be calmness, repose, freedom from anxiety or solicitude. God makes the mind of his people—his beloved—calm and tranquil, while the world around is filled with anxiety and restlessness—busy, bustling, *worried*. As a consequence of this calmness of mind, and of their confidence in him, they enjoy undisturbed repose at night. They are not kept wakeful and anxious about their worldly affairs as other men are, for they leave all with God, and *thus* he "giveth his beloved sleep." The particle "*so*"—כֵּן, *kēn* — or "thus," I apprehend, refers to the general sense of what had been said, rather than to what *immediately* precedes it;—to the fact that all success depends on God (ver. 1), and that it is always by his interposition, and not as the result of human skill, toil, or fatigue, that men find calmness, success, repose. It is only by the favour of God, and by their recognizing their dependence on him, that they find repose, success, and freedom from care.

3. *Lo, children* are *an heritage of the* LORD. They are an inheritance derived from the Lord. They are bestowed by him as really as success is in building a house, or in guarding a city. The idea is, that everything which we value, or which we desire, is a gift from God, and is to be received as from him, and to be acknowledged as his gift. The general idea here, as in the previous verses, is that of entire dependence on God. ¶ And *the fruit of the womb* is his *reward*. Or rather, "*a* reward;" that is, they are of the nature of a reward for a life of devotion to God; they are among the blessings which God promises, and are evidences of his favour. Our translation by inserting the words "*is his*" obscures the sense, as if the meaning were that they belong to God as his "reward" for what he does for us. The reverse of this is the true idea,—that they are a blessing with which he rewards or favours his people. Of course, this is not universally true, but the promise is a general one, in accordance with the usual promises in the Bible in regard to the result of piety. Children are to be reckoned among the Divine favours bestowed on us, and for their lives, their health, their virtues, and the happiness derived from them, we are, as in other things, dependent on him,—as in building a house, in guarding a city, or in the rest and comfort derived from toil.

4. *As arrows* are *in the hand of a mighty man*. They are what a parent may rely on for defence in danger, or for help in securing provision for himself and family,—as the warrior or the hunter relies on his arrows. ¶ *So* are *children of the youth*. Sons in their youth; in their prime and vigour. The comparison of sons with arrows or spears is common in Arabic poetry. See Rosenmüller, Com. *in loc.* Also Morgenland, *in loc.*

5. *Happy* is *the man*. Heb., The happiness of the man. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. ¶ *That hath his quiver full of them*. The *quiver* is a case in which arrows are carried; and as a man—a hunter or warrior—feels se-

[1] his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall [2] speak with the enemies in the [v] gate.

[1] *filled his quiver with.*
[2] Or, *subdue*, Ps. xviii. 47, or, *destroy.*
v Job v. 4.

PSALM CXXVIII.

A Song of degrees.

BLESSED [w] *is* every one that feareth the LORD: that walketh in his ways.

2 For [x] thou shalt eat the

w Ps. cxii. 1. *x* Isa. iii. 10.

cure when he has his quiver full of arrows, so a man is blessed in proportion to the number of his sons. This is in accordance with the idea often presented in the Bible, and the promise often made there of a numerous posterity as a proof of the Divine favour. ¶ *They shall not be ashamed.* They shall not turn back discomfited, hanging their heads with shame and confusion. See Notes on Job vi. 20. ¶ *But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.* Marg., *shall subdue,* or *destroy.* The Hebrew word, however, means *to speak;* and the meaning is, that they would *speak* to their foes in the place of conflict,—for a battle occurred often in the gate of a city, as the possession of a *gate,* or an entrance to a city was of so much importance to those who attacked, and those who defended it. The idea is, that they would speak *with effect;* they would distinguish themselves; they would let their presence be known. The connexion does not allow us to understand this of forensic controversy, or of transactions in business, though these were usually performed at the gates of cities. The meaning is, that they would do honour to the family, and gratify the heart of the parent, by their valour in defending their city and home, or in attacking the cities of the enemies of their country. The psalm is designed to inculcate the lesson of dependence on God for success in everything.

PSALM CXXVIII.

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is also the occasion on which it was composed. It is not known, either, why *this* psalm was placed among those which are called "Songs of Degrees." The scope and design of it, however, cannot be misunderstood. It is intended to show the advantage of religion on the affairs of this life, and especially *on the domestic relations;*—in a numerous family, in the character of children, and in being permitted to see numerous descendants. In connexion with this, the possessor of true religion would be permitted to see the prosperity of Zion—the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel. Of course this is to be regarded as a *general* statement, or as indicating what will *commonly* be true as the result of religion. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 9, 33; cxii. 2, 3. Thus industry, temperance, prudence, tend to promote health and long life, so that health and a long life are the *general* result; but it would be unfair to regard one who should assert this as meaning to say that it is *universally* true, or that men who are industrious, temperate, and prudent, are *never* sick, and *never* die.

The psalm states, in general (ver. 1), the blessedness of those who fear the Lord. This blessedness is seen (1) in their success in life, ver. 2; (2) in a numerous and happy family, ver. 3; (3) in being permitted to see children's children, ver. 6; (4) in being permitted to see the prosperity of religion—the "good of Jerusalem," and "peace upon Israel," vers. 5, 6.

1. *Blessed* is *every one that feareth the* LORD. That honours God; that is truly pious. See Notes on Ps. i. 1; cxii. 1. What that blessedness is, is indicated in the following verses. ¶ *That walketh in his ways.* The ways which God commands or directs. On the word *walketh,* see Notes on Ps. i. 1.

2. *For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.* Thou shalt enjoy the avails of thy labour; thou shalt be secure in thy rights. See Notes on Isa. iii. 10. This is a general promise respecting the prosperity which re-

labour of thine hands: happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.

3 Thy wife [y] *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine

[y] Ez. xix. 10.

ligion affords. If all men were truly religious, this would be universal, so far as man is concerned. Property would be secure; and, except so far labour of his own hands;" and property would no more be swept away by war, or become the prey of robbers and freebooters. Religion, if it



AGED TREE SURROUNDED BY YOUNG ONES.

as abundant harvests might be prevented by the direct providence of God — by blight, and mildew, and storms, and drought—all men would enjoy undisturbed the avails of their labour. Slavery, whereby one man is compelled to labour for another, would come to an end; every one who is now a slave would "eat the prevailed universally, would produce universal security in our rights. ¶ *Happy* shalt *thou* be, *and* it shall be *well with thee.* Literally, "Happy thou, and well with thee." That is, happiness and security would be the consequence of true religion.

3. *Thy wife* shall be *as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.* It is

house: thy children like olive plants [z] round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out [a] of Zion: and thou shalt see

[z] Ps. cxliv. 12. [a] Ps. cxxxiv. 3.

not uncommon in the East, as elsewhere, to train a vine along the sides of a house—partly to save ground; partly because it is a good exposure for fruit; partly as an ornament; and partly to protect it from thieves. Such a vine, in its beauty, and in the abundant clusters upon it, becomes a beautiful emblem of the mother of a numerous household. One of the blessings most desired and most valued in the East was a numerous posterity, and this, in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was among the chief blessings which God promised to them—a posterity that should resemble in number the sands of the sea or the stars of heaven. Comp. Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17; xxxii. 12. These two things—the right to the avails of one's labour (ver. 2), and a numerous family — are the blessings which are first specified as constituting the happiness of a pious household. ¶ *Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.* Comp. Notes on Ps. lii. 8. Beautiful; producing abundance; sending up young plants to take the place of the old when they decay and die. The following extract and preceding cut from "The Land and Book," vol. i., pp. 76, 77, will furnish a good illustration of this passage: — "To what particular circumstance does David refer in the 128th Psalm, where he says, Thy children shall be like olive-plants round about thy table? Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have hit upon a beautiful illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it. We may even fancy that they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole—a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine."

4. *Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed,* etc. As if he had said, "Look upon this picture. See the farmer cultivating his fields; see him gathering in the grain; see him at his own table calmly, quietly, and gratefully enjoying the fruit of his toil. Look upon that picture of a happy family—numerous, cheerful, beloved—giving promise of upholding the name of the family in future years,—and see all this as coming from the Lord, — and you have an illustration of the blessedness which follows a religious life."

5. *The* LORD *shall bless thee out of Zion.* Will not merely bless thee in the field and in the house, but will add blessings that seem to come more directly out of Zion, or that seem to be more directly connected with religion:—shall bless thee with religious influences in thine own family; shall bless thee by permitting thee to see the growth of the church and the conversion of souls. ¶ *And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem.* The prosperity, the happiness of Jerusalem: — that is, the good of the church; the advancement of pure religion. The Hebrew might be rendered, "And look thou upon the good of Jerusalem"—in the imperative; and, thus rendered, it would be a command to regard, in these circumstances, the welfare of Jerusalem, or the prosperity of the church; but the language will also admit of the other construction, and the connexion seems to require it. Thus understood, it is a promise that he who is referred

the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's [b] children, *and* [c] peace upon Israel.

[b] Gen. l. 23; Job xlii. 16.
[c] Ps. cxxv. 5.

to would be permitted to enjoy a view of the continual prosperity of religion in the world. ¶ *All the days of thy life.* To the very close of life. No higher blessing could be promised to a pious man than that he should see religion always prospering; that the last view which he would have of the world should be the rapid advances of religion; that he should die in a revival of religion.

6. *Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.* This is a continuation of the idea of blessedness as connected with a numerous posterity—an object of so much interest to the Hebrews (see Notes on ver. 3), and having its foundation in our nature. ¶ And *peace upon Israel.* See Ps. cxxv. 5. As the crowning blessing; a blessing above that of success in worldly affairs; above that of seeing a numerous and happy posterity. The love of God is the supreme affection in the mind of a pious man; the desire that his cause may prosper and triumph is to him a supreme desire. Man is truly and completely blessed only in religion.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm is entitled merely "A Song of Degrees." Its author is unknown; and the occasion on which it was written cannot now be ascertained. It is a psalm which would be applicable to many periods of the Jewish history, and it is not of such a nature that it can with certainty be referred to any one of them. There is nothing in it which would forbid us to suppose that it was composed on the return from the Babylonish exile, but there is nothing to fix it definitely to that event. Why it was made one of the "Songs of Degrees" is equally unknown. It merely refers to the fact that Israel had often been roughly and severely treated; and

PSALM CXXIX.

A Song of degrees.

MANY [1] a time have they afflicted me from [d] my youth, may Israel now say:

2 Many a time have they afflicted

[1] Or, *Much.* [d] Ex. i. 13, 14; Lam. i. 8.

it contains a prayer that those who were the enemies of Zion might be punished in a proper manner. It would seem probable that it was composed during a time of trouble, of war, or of persecution, and that the main purpose of the writer was to refer to the fact that the same thing had often occurred before, and to find consolation and support *in* that fact. The principle on which it is founded is, that there is nothing to be dreaded as the result of trial, if we have passed through the same form of trial before, and if we have not sunk but have been sustained under it. This furnishes an assurance that the same thing may occur again.

1. *Many a time.* Marg., as in Heb., *much.* Probably, however, the idea is, as expressed in our translation, *many a time; often.* So it is in the Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint; and this accords better with the connexion. ¶ *Have they afflicted me from my youth.* Have I been afflicted; have others dealt unjustly by me. The *youth* here is the beginning of the history of that people:—since we began to be a people; since the nation was founded. ¶ *May Israel now say.* May the nation now say. It is clear from this that the psalm was not written at an early period of their history.

2. *Many a time,* etc. This repetition is designed to fix the thoughts on the fact, and to impress it on the mind. The mind dwells on the fact as important in its bearing on the present occasion or emergency. The idea is, that it is no new thing to be thus afflicted. It has often occurred. It is a matter of long and almost constant experience. Our enemies have often attempted to destroy us, but in vain. What we experience now we have often experienced, and when

me from my youth; yet [e] they have not prevailed against me.

3 The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.

[e] John xvi. 33. [f] 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

4 The LORD *is* righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

5 Let [f] them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

6 Let them be as the grass

thus tried we have been as often delivered, and have nothing now therefore to fear. We are not to regard it as a strange thing that we are now afflicted; and we are not to be discouraged or disheartened as if our enemies could overcome us, for they have often tried it in vain. He who has protected us heretofore can protect us still. He who defended us before can defend us now, and the past furnishes an assurance that he will defend us if it is best that we should be protected. It does much to support us in affliction if we can recall to mind the consolations which we had in former trials, and can avail ourselves of the result of past experience in supporting us now. ¶ *Yet they have not prevailed against me.* They have never been able to overcome us. We were safe then in the Divine hands; we shall be safe in the same hands now.

3. *The ploughers ploughed upon my back.* The comparison here is undoubtedly taken from the *ploughing* of land, and the idea is that the sufferings which they had endured were such as would be well represented by a plough passing over a field, tearing up the sod; piercing deep; and producing long rows or furrows. The direct allusion would seem to be to stripes inflicted *on* the back, *as if* a plough had been made to pass over it; and the meaning is, that they had been subjected to sufferings as slaves or criminals were when the lash cut deep into the flesh. Probably the immediate thing in the mind of the psalmist was the hard bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, when they were subjected to all the evils of servitude. ¶ *They made long their furrows.* On my back. The word here used, and rendered *made long*—אָרַךְ, *arach*, means to make long, to prolong, to extend in a right line, and it may be used either in the sense of making long as to extent or space, or making long in regard to time, prolonging. The latter would seem to be the meaning here, as it is difficult to see in what sense it could be said that stripes inflicted on the back could be made long. They might, however, be continued and repeated; the sufferings might be *prolonged* sufferings as well as *deep*. It was a work of long-continued oppression and wrong.

4. *The* LORD is *righteous.* Righteous in permitting this; righteous in what he has done, and will do, in the treatment of those who inflict such wrongs. We may now safely commit our cause to him in view of what he has done in the past. He was not indifferent then to our sufferings, or deaf to the cries of his people; he interposed and punished the oppressors of his people, and we may trust him still. ¶ *He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* By which they bound us. He did this in our "youth;" when we were oppressed and beaten in Egypt. Then he interposed, and set us free.

5. *Let them all be confounded and turned back*, etc. This might be rendered in the indicative, "they *are* ashamed," but the connexion seems to require the rendering in our version. It is a prayer that God would now interpose as he had done in former times, and that he would cause *all* the haters of Zion to be put to shame as formerly.

6. *Let them be as the grass* upon *the housetops.* The housetops, or roofs of houses, covered with sand or earth, in which seeds of grass may germinate and begin to grow, but

upon the house-tops, *g* which withereth afore it groweth up;

7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing *h* of the LORD *be* upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

g 2 Kings xix. 26. *h* Ruth ii. 4.

where, as there is no depth of earth, and as the heat of the sun there would be intense, it would soon wither away. See Notes on Isa. xxxvii. 27. ¶ *Which withereth afore it groweth up.* This, even if it has any meaning, is not the meaning of the original. The idea in the Hebrew is,—and it is so rendered in the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and by Luther,—"which before [one] pulls it, withers." Grass would wither or dry up, of course, if it were pulled up or cut down, but the grass here spoken of withers even *before* this is done. It has no depth of earth to sustain it; having sprouted, and begun to grow, it soon dies—a perfect image of feebleness and desolation; of hopes begun only to be disappointed. "This morning" (says Dr. Thomson, "Land and the Book," vol. ii., p. 574) "I saw a striking illustration of this most expressive figure. To obtain a good view of the Tyropean, my guide took me to the top of a house on the brow of Zion, and the grass which had grown over the roof during the rainy season was now entirely withered and perfectly dry."

7. *Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand.* It cannot be gathered and laid up for the use of cattle, as grass can that grows in the field. It is valueless for any such purpose; or, is utterly worthless. The phrase "filleth not his hand" seems to be derived from the idea of reaping, where the reaper with one hand takes hold of the grain which he reaps, and cuts it off with the sickle in the other. ¶ *Nor he that bindeth sheaves.* The man who gathers in the harvest. This was commonly performed by a different person from the reaper. ¶ *His bosom.* This word would commonly refer to the bosom of the garment, in which things were carried; or that part above the girdle. It may be used here, however, in a larger sense,—since it is incongruous to suppose that sheaves of grain would be carried thus,—as meaning simply that one who gathered the sheaves would usually convey them in his arms, folding them to his bosom.

8. *Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the* LORD, etc. As in a harvest-field, where persons passing by express their joy and gratitude that their neighbours are reaping an abundant harvest. The phrase "The blessing of the Lord be upon you," was expressive of good wishes; of pious congratulation; of a hope of success and prosperity; as when we say, "God be with you;" or, "God bless you." The meaning here is, that such language would never be used in reference to the grass or grain growing on the house-top, since it would never justify a wish of that kind:—it would be ridiculous and absurd to apply such language to any one who should be found gathering up that dry, and withered, and worthless grass. So the psalmist prays that it may be in regard to all who hate Zion (ver. 5), that they may have no such prosperity as would be represented by a growth of luxuriant and abundant grain; no such prosperity as would be denoted by the reaper and the binder of sheaves gathering in such a harvest; no such prosperity as would be indicated by the cheerful greeting and congratulation of neighbours who express their gratification and their joy at the rich and abundant harvest which has crowned the labours of their friend, by the prayer that God would bless him. ¶ *We bless you in the name of the* LORD. Still the language of pious joy and gratification addressed by his neighbours to him who was reaping his harvest. All this is simply language drawn from com-

PSALM CXXX.

A Song of degrees.

OUT of the depths [i] have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

2 Lord, hear my voice; [k] let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

i Lam. iii. 55; Jonah ii. 2. k 2 Chron. vi. 40.

mon life, uttering a prayer that the enemies of Zion might be "confounded and turned back" (ver. 5); a prayer that they might not be successful in their endeavours to destroy the Church. Such a prayer cannot but be regarded as proper and right.

PSALM CXXX.

This psalm also is entitled "A Song of Degrees." See Notes on Introd. to Ps. cxx. The author and the occasion on which it was composed are unknown, as is also the reason why it was included in this group of psalms.

The language of the psalm seems to be that of an individual; but most interpreters suppose that it is an individual speaking in the name of the nation, and representing its calamities and its penitence. Some have imagined that the person represented as speaking in vers. 7, 8, is a different individual from the one speaking in the other part of the psalm, but there seems to be no ground for this opinion. It is commonly supposed that the psalm had reference to the state of the Jews in the Babylonish captivity, but there is no necessity for limiting it to that period, if indeed it has any reference to the people of Israel. There were many occasions in their history when the language of the psalm would not be less appropriate than at that time. But there is no *necessity* at all for supposing that it refers to the nation as such. It may be the language of an individual, mourning over his sins, and pleading for mercy, expressing deep conviction of sin, and humble trust in God as the only hope for a convinced, condemned, and penitent sinner. As such, it would represent what has occurred in thousands of cases when sinners have been brought to conviction of sin, and have cried for mercy. Understood in this manner, it is one of the most instructive and touching of the psalms. I know of no reason why it may not be so regarded.

1. *Out of the depths.* The word rendered *depths* is from a verb—עָמַק, *amak*—which means to be deep; then, to be unsearchable; then, to make deep; and it would apply to anything low, deep, or profound, as the ocean, a pit, or a valley. The word here used occurs elsewhere only in the following places:—Ps. lxix. 2, 14, where it is rendered *deep*, applied to waters; and Isa. li. 10; Ezek. xxvii. 34, where it is rendered *depths*. The word, as used here, would be applicable to deep affliction, dejection, or distress. It would be applicable (*a*) to affliction—the depths of sorrow from loss of friends, property, or bodily suffering; (*b*) sin—the depths into which the soul is plunged under the consciousness of guilt; (*c*) mental trouble—low spirits—melancholy—darkness of mind—loss of comfort in religion—powerful temptation — disappointment—the anguish caused by ingratitude—or sadness of heart in view of the crimes and the sorrows of men—or grief at the coldness, the hardness, the insensibility of our friends to their spiritual condition. From all these depths of sorrow it is our privilege to call upon the Lord; *in* those depths of sorrow it is proper thus to implore his help. Often he brings us into these "depths" that we *may* be led to call upon him; always when we are brought there, we should call upon him. ¶ *Have I cried unto thee, O* LORD. Or rather, "do I now invoke thee," or call earnestly upon thee. The language does not refer so much to the past as the present. I *now* cry for mercy; I *now* implore thy blessing. The condition is that of one who in deep sorrow, or under deep conviction for sin, pleads earnestly that God would have compassion on him.

2. *Lord, hear my voice.* This is the prayer; this is *what* he cried. It is the language of earnest pleading. ¶ *Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* Do not

3 If [l] thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

4 But [m] *there is* forgiveness with thee, that [n] thou mayest be feared.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

l Ps. cxliii. 2; Rom. iii. 20—24.
m Ex. xxxiv. 7; Dan. ix. 9; Rom. viii. 1.
n Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

turn away from me; do not disregard my cry. See Notes on Ps. v. 1.

3. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities.* If thou shouldst observe, note, attend to, regard all the evil that I have done. The Hebrew word means properly to keep, to watch, to guard. The word, as used here, refers to that kind of vigilance or watchfulness which one is expected to manifest who is on guard; who keeps watch in a city or camp by night. The idea is, If God should thus look with a scrutinizing eye; if he should try to see all that he could see; if he should suffer nothing to escape his observation; if he should deal with us exactly as we are; if he should overlook nothing, forgive nothing, we could have no hope. ¶ *Who shall stand?* Who shall stand upright? Who could stand before thee? Who could hope to be acquitted? This implies (1) that the petitioner was conscious of guilt, or knew that he was a sinner; (2) that he felt there was a depth of depravity in his heart which *God* could see, but which *he* did not,—as every man must be certain that there is in his own soul; (3) that God had the power of bringing that to light if he chose to do it, so that the guilty man would be entirely overwhelmed; (4) that he who urged the prayer rested his only hope on the fact that God would *not* mark iniquity; would *not* develope what was in him; would *not* judge him by what he saw in his heart; but would deal with him otherwise, and show him mercy and compassion. Every man must feel that if God should "mark iniquity" as it is,—if he should judge us as we are,—we could have no hope. It is only on the ground that we may be forgiven, that we can hope to come before him.

4. *But* there is *forgiveness with thee.* The Septuagint renders this ἱλασμός, propitiation, reconciliation; the Latin Vulgate *propitiatio,* propitiation. The Hebrew word means *pardon.* The idea is, that sin may be forgiven; or, that God is a Being who does pardon sin, and that this is the only ground of hope. When we come before God, the ground of our hope is not that we can justify ourselves; not that we can prove we have not sinned; not that we can explain our sins away; not that we can offer an apology for them; it is only in a frank and full confession, and in a hope that God will forgive them. He who does not come in this manner can have no hope of acceptance with God. ¶ *That thou mayest be feared.* That thou mayest be reverenced; or, that men may be brought to serve and worship thee—may be brought to a proper reverence for thy name. The idea is, not that pardon produces *fear* or *terror,*—for the very reverse is true,—but that God, by forgiving the sinner, brings him to reverence him, to worship him, to serve him:—that is, the sinner is truly reconciled to God, and becomes a sincere worshipper. The offender is *so* pardoned that he is disposed to worship and honour God; for God has revealed himself as one who forgives sin, *in order* that the sinner may be encouraged to come to him, and be his true worshipper.

5. *I wait for the* LORD. That is, in this state of distress and trouble—from these "depths" of woe, and sorrow, and conviction of sin. This implies two things: (1) that he had no other dependence; (2) that his soul was actually in a waiting posture, or that he actually looked to the Lord for his interposition. ¶ *My*

6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; [1] *I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*

7 Let Israel hope [o] in the LORD: for with the LORD *there*

[1] Or, *which watch unto the morning.*

[o] Ps. lxxi. 5; Rom. viii. 24; Heb. x. 35.

soul doth wait. I wait, with all my soul and heart. ¶ *And in his word do I hope.* In his promise. I believe that he will fulfil that promise, and that I shall find a gracious answer to my prayers. Under conviction for sin, under deep sorrow and distress of any kind, this is the only hope of man. If God does *not* interpose, there is no deliverer; that he *will* interpose we may feel assured, if we come to him with a humble, a believing, and a penitent heart.

6. *My soul* waiteth *for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.* More intently; more anxiously. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render this, "My soul hopeth in the Lord from the morning watch till night." The idea is that of watchers — night guards — who look anxiously for the break of day that they may be relieved. It is not that of persons who simply look for the return of day, but of those who are on guard—or it may be who watch beside the sick or the dying—and who look out on the east to mark the first indications of returning light. To them the night seems long; they are weary, and want repose; all around is cheerless, gloomy, and still; and they long for the first signs that light will again visit the world. Thus in affliction—the long, dark, dreary, gloomy night of sorrow —the sufferer looks for the first indication, the first faint ray of comfort to the soul. Thus under deep conviction for sin, and deep apprehension of the wrath of God—that night, dark, dreary, gloomy, often long—the soul looks for some ray of comfort, some intimation that God will be merciful, and will speak peace and pardon. ¶ I say, more than *they that watch for the morning.* Marg., *which watch unto the morning.* The translation in the text best expresses the sense. There is something exceedingly beautiful and touching in this language of repetition, though it is much enfeebled by the words which our translators have inserted, "I say, more than." The Hebrew is, "more than they that watch for the morning,— watch for the morning," as if the mind dwelt upon the words as better expressing its own anxious state than any other words could do. Every one who has been afflicted will feel the force of this; every one who has been under conviction of sin, and who has felt himself in danger of suffering the wrath of God, will remember how anxiously he longed for mercy, for light, for peace, for *some* indication, even the most faint, like the first ray which breaks in the east, that his soul *would* find mercy and peace.

7. *Let Israel hope in the* LORD. In such circumstances of affliction and distress, let not the people of God despair. In the darkest night, in calamities deep and prolonged, let not those who love God despair. The morning will dawn; the light will break in the east; deliverance and joy will come. The Hebrew here is, "Trust, O Israel, in the Lord." The *design* of the psalmist seems to be, from his own experience, to persuade others—the afflicted people of God—to put their trust in Him in whom he had himself hoped. From the very depths of affliction, guilt, and almost despair, he had looked to the Lord:—encouraged and persuaded by his example, he would now entreat the people of God everywhere and always, in like manner, to trust him. ¶ *For with the* LORD there is *mercy.* He is merciful, and in his mercy we may trust. ¶ *And with him* is *plenteous redemption.* It is ample; it is full; it abounds. It is not limited; it is not exhausted; it cannot be exhausted. So we may always feel when

is mercy, and with him *is* plenteous [p] redemption.

[p] Ps. ciii. 8.

8 And [q] he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

[q] Matt. i. 21.

we come before God, that his mercy is ample for all the wants of all the sinful and the suffering; that the provisions of his grace are unexhausted and inexhaustible. Applying this, as we may, to the work of the Saviour, we may feel that the redemption which is in him is adequate to the wants of a world, and that although numberless millions have been saved by it, yet that it is still as rich, as full, and as free as it was in the beginning;—as the ocean, though from the beginning of the world it has supplied the materials for rain and dew to water the hills, the vales, the continents, and the islands, is still full; as the light of the sun, though for thousands of ages it has poured its light on the planets, and on all the vast space between itself and those orbs, and has sent out its light into the vast regions beyond, still shines with undiminished splendour, and pours its floods of day and of glory on all those worlds.

8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* His people. He will completely deliver them from the power and the pollution of sin. This will ultimately be accomplished in reference to his whole church, and to every true member of that church. This was the highest object before the mind of the psalmist—that with which the psalm appropriately closes. And this is the highest object before the mind of every true child of God—that he may be completely and for ever delivered from the power and the dominion of sin. This will be perfectly accomplished in heaven only; but there and then the bliss will be complete. The psalm begins with an earnest cry from the "depths;" it closes with the triumphant hope of complete and eternal deliverance. There is one world where there is no occasion to cry to God from the "depths" of sorrow and of sin.

PSALM CXXXI.

This brief psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees of David." There is nothing in it to forbid the idea that it was composed by him, for it is wholly in his spirit and manner. It is not known, however, on what occasion it was written, nor why it has a place among the "Songs of Degrees." It would *seem* to have been prepared on some occasion when the author had been charged with being of a lofty and proud spirit; with meddling in matters that were above him, or above his condition in life; or with making such suggestions about public affairs as were considered to indicate a self-confident, or an aspiring mind. Without being able to determine this by any certain facts, the supposition which would seem most to accord with the contents of the psalm would be that it was written when he was a young man; when he had expressed, in the presence of others, some sentiments on public affairs which were interpreted by them as denoting a forward and self-confident spirit. If so, then this psalm was probably a private meditation on what he had done, and was of the nature of a personal examination of his spirit and motives. Knowing, as we do, what David was afterwards—his great talents as a warrior and a king, and his ability to manage public affairs—it would not, in itself, be strange or improbable that, in early life, and even when a shepherd-boy, he might have advanced opinions which would be regarded as beyond his age, as unbecoming his condition, and as manifesting a disposition to meddle with matters above him; and that he might have been rebuked for this. If it were so, we may suppose that a pious and a modest youth would give himself to self-examination, to determine whether that *was* the spirit which actuated him, and this psalm may have been the result of such an examination:—a deep self-consciousness that such was *not* the spirit which influenced him; that these were *not* the motives which prompted him to do what he had done. The psalm, therefore, may, perhaps, without impropriety, be regarded as furnishing evidence of the early manifestation of a disposition on the part of David to

PSALM CXXXI.

A Song of degrees of David.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I [1] exercise myself in great matters, or in things too [2] high for me.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted [3] myself, as a child [r] that

[1] *walk.* [2] *wonderful,* Job xlii. 3.
[3] *my soul.* [r] Matt. xviii. 3.

study public affairs, and of an early manifestation of a knowledge on that subject which was regarded as above his years and his station; and, at the same time, of his readiness to profit by rebuke, and to examine his real motives; and of his consciousness that he was *not* actuated by self-confident and aspiring views. The psalm manifests a humble spirit, and a spirit of confident trust in God. If the interpretation thus suggested could be confirmed,—or if it may be allowed,—the psalm would be one of the most valuable records of the early life and character of David. It would add to the interest of this conjecture, if we might suppose that this psalm was left among the effusions of his early years—among, as we should say, his "private papers,"—and was discovered after he was dead, and was then arranged and published among these "Songs of Degrees."

1. LORD, *my heart is not haughty.* Though this is charged upon me; though I may have said things which seem to imply it; though this might appear a just inference from my conduct,—yet I am conscious that this is *not* my real character. What I have said was not the result of ambition. ¶ *Nor mine eyes lofty.* I am conscious that I am not ambitious and aspiring—as I am accused of being. What I have said is not the result of such a feeling, nor should such a charge be brought against me. ¶ *Neither do I exercise myself.* Marg., as in Heb., *walk.* I do not walk about among such things; I do not pry into them; I do not meddle with them. What I have said or done is not, as has been said concerning me, the result of a meddlesome and interfering spirit. It may *seem* to be so; my own consciousness tells me it is *not* so. The interpretation put upon my conduct may be natural; but I am conscious to myself that it is not the right interpretation. ¶ *In great matters, or in things too high for me.* Marg., as in Heb., *wonderful.* The word *wonderful* would apply to matters fitted to excite astonishment by their vastness, or their unusual nature —as prodigies or miracles; and then, great and lofty truths. It would apply also to things which might be regarded as far above the capacity of a child, or of one in obscure life, and with slight advantages of education; and, as above suggested, it may have been the accusation brought against him, that, in respect to public matters, matters of state,—or to the more elevated doctrines of religion,—he had manifested a spirit unbecoming one in early years, and of humble rank, and that this indicated a desire to meddle with matters which he could not understand, and which could not pertain to him. He was conscious, he says, that he was *not* actuated by that spirit.

2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself.* Marg., as in Heb., *my soul.* The Hebrew is, "If I have not soothed and quieted my soul." This is a strong mode of affirming that he *had* done it. The negative form is often thus used to denote a strong affirmation. The full form would be, "God knows if I have not done this;" or, "If I have not done this, then let me bear the consequences; let me be punished." The idea is that he was *conscious* he *had* done this. Instead of being arrogant, proud, and ambitious,—instead of meddling with matters above him, and which did not belong to him, he had known his proper place. He had been gentle, calm, retiring. The word rendered *behaved* means properly to be even or level; then, in the form here used, to make even, smooth, or level; and it is here used in the sense of

is weaned of his mother: my soul *is* even as a weaned child.

3 Let Israel hope in the LORD, [1] from henceforth and for ever.

[1] *from now.*

calming the mind; smoothing down its roughnesses; keeping it tranquil. Comp. Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 13, in our version, "I *reckoned*" (the same word as here) "till morning,"—but where the correct translation would be, "I *composed* or calmed myself until morning." So the meaning here is, that he had kept his mind calm, and even, and gentle. ¶ *As a child that is weaned of his mother.* See Isa. xxviii. 9. There have been very various interpretations of this passage. See Rosenmüller *in loc.* Perhaps the true idea is that of a child, when weaned, as leaning upon its mother, or as reclining upon her breast. As a weaned child leans upon its mother. That is, as a child, accustomed to the breast, and now deprived of it, lays its head gently where it had been accustomed to derive its nutriment, feeling its dependence, hoping to obtain nourishment again: not angry, but gently grieved and sad. A little child thus clinging to its mother—laying its head gently down on the bosom — languishing — looking for nourishment—would be a most tender image of meekness and gentleness. ¶ *My soul* is *even as a weaned child.* Literally, "As a weaned child upon me my soul;" that is probably, My soul leans upon me as a weaned child. My powers, my nature, my desires, my passions, thus lean upon me, are gentle, unambitious, confiding. The Septuagint renders this in a different manner, and giving a different idea, "Had I not been humble, but exalted myself as a weaned child doth against its mother, how wouldst thou have retributed against my soul!" The Hebrew, however, requires that it should be otherwise interpreted. The *idea* is, that he *had* been gentle; that he had calmed down his feelings; that whatever aspirations he might have had, he had kept them under; that though he might have made inquiries, or offered suggestions that *seemed* to savour of pride or ambition, he had been conscious that this was not so, but that he had known his proper place, and had kept it. The sentiment here is, that religion produces a child-like spirit; that it disposes all to know and keep their right place; that to whatever inquiries or suggestions it may lead among the young, it will tend to keep them modest and humble; and that whatever suggestions one in early life may be disposed to make, they will be connected with a spirit that is humble, gentle, and retiring. Religion produces self-control, and is inconsistent with a proud, an arrogant, and an ambitious spirit.

3. *Let Israel hope in the* LORD, etc. The connexion would seem to require us to understand this as the assertion of him who had been accused of thoughts which seemed to be too lofty. As the *result* of all his reflections (of those reflections for which he was rebuked and charged with pride, but which were really conceived in a modest spirit),—as expressing what he *saw* that seemed to be in advance of what others saw, or to indicate a habit of thought beyond his years,—he says that there were reasons *why* Israel should hope in the Lord; that there was a foundation for confident trust; that there was that in the Divine character which was a just ground of reliance; that there was that in the course of events—in the tendencies of things—which made it proper for the people of God, for the church, to hope, to confide, to feel assured of its ultimate and permanent safety. This would indicate the nature of the suggestions which he had expressed, and which had exposed him to the charge of arrogance; and it *would* also indicate a ripe and mature habit of thinking, beyond what might be expected from one in very early

PSALM CXXXII.

A Song of degrees.

LORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions;

2 How he sware unto the LORD, *and* vowed [s] unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;

[s] 2 Sam. vii. 1, etc.

life. All this was, probably, applicable to David in his early years, as to the reflections which might have foreshadowed what he *would* be in future; this was eminently applicable to David's Descendant,—greater than he,—who, at twelve years of age, astonished the Hebrew doctors in the temple with "his understanding and answers" (Luke ii. 47); this gives a beautiful view of modesty joined with uncommon gifts in early life; this shows what is always the nature of true religion—as producing modesty, and as prompting to hope.

PSALM CXXXII.

This psalm is simply entitled "A Song of Degrees." The author of it is not known, nor can the occasion on which it was written be certainly ascertained. It would seem to have been composed in a time of public distress and disaster; when the affairs of the nation were in jeopardy, and especially when the line of the monarchy seemed about to fail, and the promises made to David seemed about to come to nought. It would have been a suitable occasion for such a psalm at the time immediately preceding the captivity in Babylon, or on the return from Babylon, when the throne was tottering or had fallen, and when God seemed to be about to forsake his house, the temple,—or had forsaken it, and suffered it to fall to ruin. At such a time of national disaster, when it appeared as if the house of God was to be permanently destroyed, and the government to be overturned for ever, it was natural and proper thus to make mention of the zeal, the toil, and the sacrifice of him who had sought a "habitation" for God;—who had planned and laboured that there might be a permanent dwelling-place for the Most High, and who had received gracious promises from God himself in regard to the permanent establishment of his family on the throne. It would be appropriate, also, to recall this as a foundation for the prayer that God would again visit Zion, and would fulfil the promises which he had given to David.

The psalm therefore consists properly of two parts: I. A statement of the zeal of David for the ark, in securing a permanent abode for it, vers. 1-8; and II. A reference to the promises made to David and his posterity, and a prayer that these promises might be carried out and accomplished, vers. 9-18.

1. LORD, *remember David.* Call to remembrance his zeal, his labour, his trials in order that there might be a permanent place for thy worship. Call this to remembrance in order that his purpose in thy cause may not be frustrated; in order that the promises made to him may be accomplished. ¶ And *all his afflictions.* The *particular* trial here referred to was his care and toil, that there might be a settled home for the ark. The word used would not refer merely to what is specified in the following verses (his bringing up the ark to Mount Zion), but to his purpose to build a house for God, and —since he was not permitted himself to build it because he was a man of war, and had been engaged in scenes of blood, (1 Kings v. 3; 1 Chron. xxii. 8) — to his care and toil in collecting materials for the temple to be erected by his son and successor. It is not, therefore, his *general* afflictions which are here meant, but his anxiety, and his efforts to secure a lasting place for the worship of God.

2. *How he sware unto the* LORD. The solemn oath which he took that he would make this the first object; that he would give himself no rest till this was done; that he would sacrifice his personal ease and comfort in order that he might thus honour God. This oath or purpose is not recorded in the history. The fair interpretation of this would be either (1) That these words properly ex-

3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids,
5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, [1] an habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob.
6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephra-

[1] *habitations.*

pressed what was in the mind of David at the time,—that is, his acts implied that this purpose was in his heart; or (2) that this vow was actually *made* by David, though not elsewhere recorded. Such a vow might have been made, and the remembrance of it kept up by tradition, or it might have been suggested to the author of the psalm by direct inspiration. ¶ And *vowed unto the mighty* God *of Jacob.* See Gen. xlix. 24. The God whom Jacob worshipped, and who had manifested himself so signally to him as a God of might or power.

3. *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house.* The tent of my dwelling; the place where I abide. ¶ *Nor go up into my bed.* The couch of my bed, or where I sleep. I will make it my first business to find a dwelling-place for the Lord; a place where the ark may repose.

4. *I will not give sleep to mine eyes,* etc. There is no difference here between the words *sleep* and *slumber.* The meaning is, that the house of the Lord should be his first care.

5. *Until I find out a place for the* LORD. A place for the ark of God; a place where it may constantly and safely remain. The symbol of the Divine presence rested on the mercy-seat, the cover of the ark, and hence this was represented as the seat or the house of God. ¶ *An habitation for the mighty* God *of Jacob.* Heb., "For the mighty One of Jacob." The reference is to a *permanent* dwelling-place for the ark. It had been moved from place to place. There was no house appropriated to it, or reared expressly for it, and David resolved to provide such a house,—at first, a tent or tabernacle on Mount Zion,—and then, a more spacious and magnificent structure, the temple. The latter he was not permitted to build, though the purpose was in his heart.

6. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah.* Most probably this is the language of the contemporaries of David; or this is what they might be supposed to say; or this is what tradition reports that they *did* say. David's purpose, as referred to in the previous verses, is not recorded in the history, and the memory of the whole transaction may have been handed down by tradition. Or, this *may* be merely poetic language, expressing the feelings of those who, when sent out by David, or accompanying him, found the ark. Much difficulty has been felt in regard to this verse. There is no mention in the history of the fact that the ark was "heard of" at Ephrata, or that it was ever there. The name *Ephrata*—אֶפְרָתָה—is applied (1) to a region of country to which was subsequently given the name Bethlehem, Gen. xxxv. 16–19; Ruth iv. 11. (2) Properly to Bethlehem, a city of Judah, the full name of which was Bethlehem-Ephratah, Gen. xlviii. 7; Micah v. 2. (3) It is a proper name, 1 Chron. ii. 19, 50; iv. 4. (4) It *may* perhaps be the same as *Ephraim.* Comp. Judges xii. 5; 1 Sam. i. 1; 1 Kings xi. 26. Some have supposed the meaning to be, that they found it within the limits of the tribe of *Ephraim,* and that the word *Ephratah* is used here with reference to that; but this is a forced construction. It may have been indeed true that the ark was found within the limits of that tribe, but the word Ephratah would not *naturally* denote this; and, besides, the tribe of Ephraim was so large, and covered such an extent of territory, that this would convey no distinct information; and it cannot

tah; we found it in the fields of the wood.

7 We [t] will go into his tabernacles; we will worship [u] at his footstool.

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of [v] thy strength.

[t] Ps. cxxii. 1. [u] Ps. xcix. 5. [v] Ps. lxxviii. 61.

be supposed that the writer meant to say merely that they found it within the limits of a *tribe*. Nor can it mean that they actually found the ark *at* Ephrata, or Bethlehem, for this would not be true. A simple and natural interpretation of the passage has been suggested, which seems to make it plain:—that, in their search for the ark, it was at Ephratah or Bethlehem that they first *heard* of it, but that they actually *found* it in the fields of the wood. It may seem strange that there should have been so much uncertainty about the ark as is here implied; that David did not know where it was; and that none of the priests knew. But, while it must be admitted that it *seems* to be strange, and that the fact is not of easy explanation, it is to be remembered that the ark was at one time in the possession of the Philistines; that when it was re-taken it seems to have had no very permanent resting-place; that it may have been removed from one spot to another as circumstances required; that it may have been committed now to one, and now to another, for safe keeping; and thus it *might* have occurred, in the unsettled and agitated state of affairs, that its exact situation might be unknown, and that a somewhat diligent search was necessary in order to find it. We know too little of the times to enable us to pronounce upon the subject with much confidence. ¶ *We found it in the fields of the wood.* Continuing our search, we found it there. Perhaps Kirjath-jearim, 1 Sam. vii. 1; 1 Chron. xiii. 5. It was to Kirjath-jearim that the ark was carried after it had been taken by the Philistines (1 Sam. vi. 21). The literal meaning of the passage here is, "The fields of the wood"—or of *Jear*, where the word in Hebrew is the same as in Kirjath-*jearim*. The name Kirjath-jearim means Forest Town, or, city of the woods; and the allusion here is the same as in 1 Sam. vii. 1. The interpretation, then, seems to be that they heard of the ark, or learned where it was, when they were at Ephrata or Bethlehem; but that they actually found it in the vicinity of Kirjath-jearim. The *ignorance* in the case may have been merely in regard to the exact place or house where it was at that time kept. Bethlehem was the home or city of David, and the *idea* is, that, when there, and when it was contemplated to remove the ark to Mount Zion, information or intelligence was brought there of its exact locality, and they went forth to bring it to its new abode or its permanent resting-place.

7. *We will go into his tabernacles.* His tents, or the fixed resting-place prepared for the ark. This is evidently language supposed to have been used on bringing up the ark into its place in Jerusalem:—language such as they may be supposed to have *sung* or *recited* on that occasion. ¶ *We will worship at his footstool.* See Notes on Ps. xcix. 5. The meaning is, the footstool of God:—let us bow humbly at his feet. The language denotes profound adoration. It expresses the feelings of those who bare the ark to its assigned place.

8. *Arise, O* LORD, *into thy rest.* Into that which is appointed for its permanent place of repose, that it may no longer be removed from spot to spot. This is spoken of the ark, considered as the place where God, by an appropriate symbol, abode. That symbol—the Shechinah—rested on the cover of the ark. The same language was used by Solomon at

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout [w] for joy.

10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

11 The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of [x] the fruit of thy [1] body will I set upon thy throne;

[w] Isa. lxv. 14. [x] 1 Kings viii. 25.

[1] *belly.*

the dedication of the temple: "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy strength," 2 Chron. vi. 41. ¶ *Thou, and the ark of thy strength.* The ark, the symbol of the Divine power, *as if* the power of God resided there, or as if the Almighty had his abode there. Perhaps the language was derived from the fact that the ark, in the wars of the Hebrews against their foes, was a symbol of the Divine presence and protection, —that by which the Divine power was put forth.

9. *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.* This is also substantially the same language that was used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple. See again 2 Chron. vi. 41. The idea is, that in the service of such a God, the priests, the ministers of religion, should be holy. The honour of religion demanded it. It was the first qualification of those who "served the altar;" a qualification without which all other endowments would be valueless. On the word *clothed*, see Notes on Ps. xxxv. 26; comp. Ps. lxv. 13; xciii. 1; civ. 1; Isa. lxi. 10; 1 Pet. v. 5. ¶ *And let thy saints shout for joy.* Thy holy ones; all who truly worship and honour thee. Let them be happy *in* such a God; in thy presence; in thy service. The fact that there *is* a God, and *such* a God, and that this God is *ours* —that we *may* serve him, glorify him, enjoy him—is fitted to fill the mind with joy.

10. *For thy servant David's sake.* Because of the promise made to him; because of the zeal which he has shown in securing a place for the ark. Let it not be in vain that he has shown such a regard to the honour of God; let not the promises made to him fail. Such a prayer is proper now. There is nothing wrong in our beseeching God to carry out and accomplish the purposes cherished by his church for promoting the honour of his name; or for a child to pray that the purposes of a pious parent in regard to himself may not fail. It is an expression of nature—a desire that the labour and sacrifices of those who have gone before us should not be lost. This is the language of the author of the psalm, and of those for whom the psalm was composed. See ver. 1. In view of all that David has done, do thou now show favour and mercy. ¶ *Turn not away the face of thine anointed.* As if in displeasure, or in forgetfulness. The word *anointed* would refer to one who was set apart as a king, a priest, or a prophet. See Notes on Matt. i. 1. The word would be applicable to David himself, as the anointed king; in a higher sense it is applicable to the Messiah, the Christ. The reference here is probably to David himself, *as if* a failure to carry out his purposes in regard to the sanctuary, or to fulfil the promises made to him, would be a turning away the face from him; would be a mark of the Divine displeasure against him. The prayer is, that God would carry out those purposes *as if* his face was continually turned with benignity and favour towards David.

11. *The* LORD *hath sworn* in *truth unto David.* He has made a gracious promise, confirmed by an oath, which we may plead in our present necessities. That promise was made "in truth,"—that is, sincerely,—so that it will certainly be carried out,—so that we may appeal to God, on the ground of his faithfulness, to keep his word. ¶ *He will not turn from it.* We may be certain that he will carry it out. We may appeal to him on the

12 If thy children will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion: he hath desired *it* for his habitation.

14 This [y] *is* my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have

[y] Ps. lxviii. 16. [1] Or, *surely*. [z] Luke i. 53.

15 I will [1] abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with [z] bread.

16 I [a] will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a [2] lamp [b] for mine anointed.

[a] ver. 9. [2] Or, *candle*. [b] 2 Chron. xxi. 7.

basis of that promise with the utmost confidence. ¶ *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.* Marg., as in Heb., *of thy belly.* The throne would descend to his posterity, 2 Sam. vii. 12; see Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4.

12. *If thy children will keep my covenant,* etc. This was the condition implied in the promise,—that they were to keep the law of God, and to serve and obey him. If they did not, they could not, of course, plead the promise. This principle is universal. We cannot plead any promise of God in our behalf, or in behalf of our children, unless we obey his commands, and are ourselves faithful to him. See the sentiment in this verse illustrated in the Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 30–37.

13. *For the* LORD *hath chosen Zion.* He has selected it as the place where he will abide; the seat of his religion. This is a new plea or argument, and shows that the psalm had reference to Zion or Jerusalem, as then in danger, or as having been in danger. See Notes on Ps. xlviii. 1, 2. ¶ *He hath desired* it *for his habitation.* A place where to abide. He had selected this as the permanent place of his worship.

14. *This is my rest for ever.* My home; my permanent abode. I will no more remove from place to place—as when the ark was carried in the wilderness, and as it has been since; but Zion shall now be the fixed seat of religion. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 16. ¶ *Here will I dwell,* etc. Permanently; constantly.

15. *I will abundantly bless her provision.* Marg., *surely.* Hebrew, "Blessing I will bless,"—a strong affirmation, meaning that he would certainly do it; that he would do it in every way; that every needed blessing would be imparted. The word rendered *provision* is a cognate form of the word in Ps. lxxviii. 25, translated *meat:* "He sent them *meat* to the full." It properly refers to food for a journey, but it is applicable to any kind of food. The original idea is that of food obtained by hunting—as game, venison: Gen. xxv. 28; Job xxxviii. 41. The meaning here is, that God would provide abundantly for their support. ¶ *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* I will give them what they need. See Notes on Ps. xxxvii. 25.

16. *I will also clothe her priests with salvation.* See Notes on ver. 9, where—instead of the word which in 2 Chron. vi. 41, as here, is "*salvation,*"—we find the word "*righteousness.*" The promise here corresponds to the prayer in ver. 9. It is a reason why God should interpose. What they prayed for (ver. 9), had been expressly *promised,* and that promise is now urged as a plea why the prayer should be granted. ¶ *And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* See ver. 9. In 2 Chron. vi. 41 the prayer is, "And let thy saints rejoice in goodness." The sense is not materially varied. The Hebrew is, "And let thy saints rejoicing rejoice;" that is, *let them shout, shout;* let them be full of joy.

17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud.* The horn was an emblem of power; and then, of success or prosperity. See Notes on Luke i. 69. The word rendered "to bud"

18 His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

PSALM CXXXIII.

A Song of degrees of David.

BEHOLD, how good and how

means to grow, or to shoot forth as a plant, or as grass grows; and then it may be applied to anything which shoots forth or grows. The allusion here would seem to be to a horn as it shoots forth on the head of an animal. So David would be endowed with growing strength; would have the means of defending himself against his enemies, and of securing victory. The language had no original reference to the Messiah, but it is not improperly applied to him (as springing from David) in Luke i. 69. On the word *horn*, see Notes on Ps. lxxv. 4. Comp. Ps. lxxxix. 17, 24; xcii. 10; cxii. 9; Dan. vii. 8; viii. 5. ¶ *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* Marg., *a candle.* I have appointed; that is, I have given him that which will always be as a lamp or guide to him; that by which he will see to walk. I have given him true and precious promises, which will be to him as a lamp, a candle, a lantern is to one walking in the night. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 28; cxix. 105.

18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* They shall be so confounded that shame shall seem to cover them as a garment. See Notes on Ps. cix. 29. That is, David would be triumphant. ¶ *But upon himself shall his crown flourish.* His crown shall be as a fresh, blooming garland. The Hebrew word used here may mean either to *glitter*, or to *flower*, to *flourish* or *bloom*. As applied to a crown, it may mean either that it would sparkle or glitter, as set with precious stones,—or (under the idea of a garland) it may mean that it would appear to bloom or blossom. In either case it denotes success, joy, triumph,—and is a promise of prosperity to David as a king. This was a part of the promise referred to by the psalmist, and a ground of the plea in the psalm. God had made these precious promises to David and his posterity; and now, in a time of sorrow and disaster, when the glory of the crown seemed about to pass away, the psalmist, in the name of the people, and in language to be used by the people, prays that those ancient promises might be remembered and fulfilled. So, in a time of general religious declension, we may plead the promises, so rich and so abundant, which God has made to his church, as a reason for his gracious interposition; for his coming to revive his work.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees of David." It is one of the four in this collection ascribed to him, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the inscription. As to the occasion on which the psalm was composed, however, we have no information. Perhaps there was nothing special in the occasion which called it forth, since it may have been written at any time to set forth the beauty and the power of brotherly love. It may have been composed either for the service of the people when gathered in their annual festivals, or in view of the harmony—the beauty and order—evinced when they *were* thus gathered together.

The psalm is an illustration, in most beautiful language, of brotherly love, particularly in regard to its calm, and gentle, and sweet influence—like the ointment which flowed down from the head of the anointed priest, or like the gentle dew on Hermon or Zion. It is a psalm applicable alike to a church; to a family; to a gathering of friends.

1. *Behold.* As if he looked upon such a gathering, and saw there the expressions of mutual love. This may have been uttered in the actual contemplation of such an assemblage; or it may have been a picture of the imagination. ¶ *How good.* How good in itself; how proper; how fitted to promote happiness, and to diffuse good influences abroad. ¶ *And*

pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell [1] together in unity!

[1] *even together.*

2 *It is* like the precious ointment [c] upon the head, that ran

c Ex. xxx. 25, 30.

how pleasant. The word here used means lovely, charming, attractive; that which fills the mind with delight, spoken of one beloved, Cant. vii. 6; of a friend, 2 Sam. i. 26; of a place, Gen. xlix. 15; of words, Prov. xv. 26; of beauty or glory, as of Jehovah, Ps. xxvii. 4. It is descriptive of the pleasure which we derive from a picture, from a landscape, from sweet sounds and gentle voices, or from love. ¶ *For brethren to dwell together in unity.* Marg., *even together.* Heb., "The dwelling of brethren also together." Perhaps the idea in the word "*also*" may be, that while the unity of brethren when separate, or as they were seen when scattered in their habitations, was beautiful, it was *also* pleasant to see them when actually assembled, or when they actually came together to worship God. As applicable to the church, it may be remarked (1) that all the people of God—all the followers of the Redeemer—*are brethren*, members of the same family, fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, Matt. xxiii. 8. (2) There is a peculiar fitness that they *should* be united, or dwell in unity. (3) There is much that is beautiful and lovely *in* their unity and harmony. They are redeemed by the same Saviour; they serve the same Master; they cherish the same hope; they are looking forward to the same heaven; they are subject to the same trials, temptations, and sorrows; they have the same precious consolations. There is, therefore, the beauty, the "goodness," the "pleasantness" of obvious fitness and propriety in their dwelling together in unity. (4) Their unity is adapted to produce an important influence on the world, John xvii. 21. No small part of the obstructions to the progress of religion in the world has been caused by the strifes and contentions of the professed friends of God. A new impulse would be given at once to the cause of religion if all the followers of the Lord Jesus acted in harmony:—if every Christian would properly recognize every other Christian as his brother; if every true church *would* recognize every other church *as* a church; if all ministers of the Gospel would recognize all other ministers as such; and if all who *are* Christians, and who walk worthy of the Christian name, were admitted freely to partake with all others in the solemn ordinance which commemorates the Saviour's dying love. Until this is done, all that is said about Christian *union* in the church is a subject of just derision to the world,—for how *can* there be union when one class of ministers refuse to recognize the Christian standing, and the validity of the acts, of other ministers of the Lord Jesus,—when one part of the Christian church solemnly refuses to admit another portion to the privileges of the Lord's table,—when by their actions large portions of the professed followers of the Redeemer regard and treat others as having no claims to a recognition as belonging to the church of God, and as left for salvation to his "uncovenanted mercies."

2. It is *like the precious ointment upon the head.* That is, which was poured upon the head of the high priest, when consecrated to the holy office. The Hebrew is, "the *good* ointment." For a description of the ointment which was used in the consecration of the high priest, and the holy things of the sanctuary, see Ex. xxx. 22–30. Comp. Notes on Isa. lxi. 3, on the phrase "oil of joy." Anointing with oil was common on festivals and joyous occasions (see Notes on Ps. xxiii. 5), and hence it became an emblem of anything joyous, happy, beautiful; and the idea seemed to be carried to the highest degree when it

down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, [d] *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

[d] Deut. iv. 48.

was connected with the anointing of a high priest to the sacred duties of his office. There is no other resemblance between the idea of anointing with oil and that of harmony among brethren than this which is derived from the gladness—the joyousness—connected with such an anointing. The psalmist wished to give the highest idea of the pleasantness of such harmony; and he, therefore, compared it with that which was most beautiful to a pious mind—the idea of a solemn consecration to the highest office of religion. The comparison is one which would not unnaturally occur to a Jew. ¶ *That ran down upon the beard.* Descending from the head upon the long, flowing beard. The idea here is that of *copiousness*, or *abundance*—as if so *much* ointment was poured forth as to descend on the whole person, consecrating the entire man. ¶ Even *Aaron's beard.* The word "even" here, introduced by our translators, weakens the force and beauty of the comparison. The psalmist had the simple image of Aaron before his mind, without intending to compare him with any other. ¶ *That went down to the skirts of his garments.* Literally, "to the *mouth* of his garment." The idea is that the anointing oil was abundant enough to flow down so as to fall on his entire robe, diffusing a sweet fragrance all around. It is *possible*, though it may seem like a conceit, that the psalmist may have had an idea of *unity* in this, as if in the anointing of the high priest the whole *man* was consecrated, or was "*united*" in the consecration. It was not merely the head, but the beard, the raiment, the entire person, that partook of the fragrance of the anointing oil. Thus love in a Christian community is so abundant—so overflowing—that it spreads over all the spiritual body, the church; the same sweet and holy influence, represented by the oil of anointing, pervades all, and combines all in one.

3. *As the dew of Hermon*, etc. On the situation of Mount Hermon, see Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 12. The literal rendering of this passage would be, "Like the dew of Hermon which descends on the mountains of Zion." According to our version *two* things are referred to: the dew of Hermon, *and* the dew on the mountains of Zion, But this is not in the original. There no *dew* is referred to but that which belongs to Hermon. It has, of course, been made a question how the dew of Hermon, a remote mountain, could be said to descend on the mountains of Zion, and our translators have sought to solve the difficulty by inserting the words "and as the dew." Some have supposed that the proper interpretation is to refer the *comparison* in the passage to the dew of Hermon, and that all which follows is an application of the thought:—"Like the dew of Hermon is the influence which comes down upon the mountains of Zion," etc. The most probable and plausible interpretation, however, it seems to me, is, that the mind of the poet was turned to the dew of Hermon—to the gentleness, and the copiousness, and the vivifying nature of that dew,—diffusing beauty and abundance all around,—and that he thought of *that* dew, or dew *like* that, as descending on the mountains of Zion. Not that the dew *of* Hermon actually descended there; but when changing the comparison, in illustration of brotherly love, from oil to dew, he most naturally thought (perhaps from some former observation) of the dew of Hermon, and immediately thought of Zion *as if* that dew de-

PSALM CXXXIV.

A Song of degrees.

BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all *ye* servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

scended there:—that is, love, unity, and concord there would be as if the dew of Hermon should descend on the barren hills of Zion or Jerusalem, there diffusing beauty, abundance, fertility. The comparison of the influence of brotherly love, or unity, with *dew* is not a forced or unnatural one. So calm, so gentle, so refreshing on the tender grain, on the young plants, on the flowers, is *dew*, that it is a striking image of the influences which produce brotherly love and harmony. ¶ *For there the* LORD *commanded the blessing.* He appointed that as the place of worship; as the seat of his residence; the source of all holy influences. See Notes on Ps. lxxviii. 67–69; lxxxvii. 2. ¶ Even *life for evermore.* Literally, "Life to eternity." That is, such influences go from that place as to lead to eternal life, or as to secure eternal life. It is in Zion, in his church, that he has made known the way to eternal life, and the means by which it may be obtained. To the end of the world this beautiful psalm will be sung in the church alike as *expressing* the charm which there is in unity among brethren and in the church; and as *tending to promote* that unity whose beauty it is designed to commend. Happy will be that day when the church shall be so united that it may be sung everywhere, as expressing what *is*, and not merely what *should be.*

PSALM CXXXIV.

This is the last psalm of the collection or group called "Songs of Degrees," and it is of the nature of a *doxology* as now sung in our places of worship. Its author is unknown. From anything that appears in the psalm itself, it may have been composed originally to occupy the very place which it does occupy here. The psalm is a summons to praise, and it would seem not improbable that it was designed to be sung by alternate choirs,—the first (vers. 1, 2) representing the people approaching the sanctuary, calling on those who habitually serve God there—the ministers of religion—to lift up their hands in the sanctuary and to praise the Lord;—the second (ver. 3), the response of the priests or the ministers of religion, pronouncing a blessing on the people—a blessing as proceeding out of Zion.

1. *Behold.* As if calling attention to the fact that they were there, or had come. ¶ *Bless ye the* LORD. Praise Jehovah. Making known their desire that God should be praised, and calling on those who presided over the public worship of the sanctuary to engage now in that service as expressive of *their* feelings. ¶ *All* ye *servants of the* LORD. The priests or ministers of religion, appointed especially to this service. ¶ *Which by night stand in the house of the* LORD. There was a class of singers in the temple who devoted the night, or a part of the night, to praise; and it is possible that this service may have been, as it was subsequently in some of the monasteries, continued by succeeding choirs, during the entire night. Thus in 1 Chron. ix. 33, it is said, "And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free; for they were employed in that work day and night." This class is particularly addressed in this psalm, as if they were especially favoured, or as if they had peculiarly the ear of God in the silence of the night, and when the world slumbered around them. There *is* something favourable to devotion in the silence of the night; when the world sleeps; when we are alone with God; when it *seems* as if God would more particularly attend to our cry since the rest of the world is still, and does not (as it were) need his care. All this may be fancy; but the effect may be to

2 Lift [e] up your hands *in* [1] the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

3 The LORD, that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.

PSALM CXXXV.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise [f] ye the name of the LORD; praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.

2 Ye [g] that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,

[e] 1 Tim. ii. 8. [1] Or, *holiness*.
[f] Ps. cxlv. 1; Neh. ix. 5.
[g] Ps. xcii. 13.

make the mind more solemn, and better fitted for devotion.

2. *Lift up your hands* in *the sanctuary*. Marg., *In holiness*. The Hebrew word properly means *holiness*, but it may be applied to *a holy place*. See Ps. xx. 2. The lifting up of the hands is properly expressive of prayer, but the phrase *may* be used to denote praise or worship in general. ¶ *And bless the* LORD. In the night-watches,—while all around is still,—let there be one place where the voice of praise shall ascend on high.

3. *The* LORD *that made heaven and earth*. The great Creator of all things. This is probably the language of those who were thus employed in the service of the Lord at night; their response to the address in the first two verses. ¶ *Bless thee out of Zion*. That is, bless those who thus approached the sanctuary, and called on those within to praise the Lord. This is the answer. Let the blessing of God rest on *you*. It is language showing that they appreciated the kind and encouraging salutation, and that they reciprocated the feelings and the good wishes of those who came to worship. In the name of the Lord whom they served, therefore, and appealing to him, they pronounced a blessing on those who thus approached the sanctuary. Men do not come near the house of God—the place of public worship — with kind and sympathising feelings without a blessing from the sanctuary, without a response that welcomes them, and that meets all their aspirations. There is always in Zion—in the church—a voice, by day and night, which pronounces a blessing on those who wish it well, who seek its good, and who desire to partake of the favour of God. ¶ *Out of Zion*. That is, may God speak to you out of Zion; may he confer on you such blessings as properly go out of Zion; or such as Zion (or his church) can furnish. Go not away unblessed; go not without a token of Divine favour,—for God *will* bless you.

PSALM CXXXV.

This psalm has no title in Hebrew; and the author, and the occasion on which it was written, are alike unknown. It is general in its character, though its imagery is taken mostly from Hebrew history.

The sole design of the psalm is to excite to the praise of God; or to show reasons for that praise. As grounds or reasons for this, the psalmist refers to the fact that God is good, ver. 3; to the fact that he had chosen Jacob for himself, ver. 4; to the greatness of God as seen in the works of nature, vers. 5–7; to the history of the Hebrew people, vers. 8–12; to the inability of idols to aid, vers. 13–18; and, in view of all this, he calls on all classes of the people to praise the Lord, vers. 19–21.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Heb., *Hallelu-jah*. Literally, "Praise *Jah*," —an abridged name for Jehovah. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 4. ¶ *Praise ye the name of the* LORD. The same as praising God himself. ¶ *Praise* him, *O ye servants of the* LORD. You who are especially designated or appointed to this service, Ps. cxxxiv. 1.

2. *Ye that stand in the house of the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. cxxxiv. 1. That is, those who were appointed to conduct the services of religion, the priests and Levites. ¶ *In the courts of the house of our God*. The

3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good: sing praises unto his name; for [h] *it is* pleasant.

4 For [i] the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure.

5 For I know that the LORD *is* great, and *that* our Lord *is* above all gods.

[h] Ps. cxlvii. 1.
[i] Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6, 7; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

6 Whatsoever [k] the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

7 He [l] causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he [m] maketh lightnings for the rain: he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.

[k] Ps. xxxiii. 9, 11; Dan. iv. 35.
[l] Jer. xiv. 22; Zech. x. 1. [m] Jer. x. 13.

areas, or parts assigned for different classes of worshippers around the tabernacle and the temple. See Notes on Matt. xxi. 12; Ps. xcii. 13.

3. *Praise the* LORD; *for the* LORD is *good.* See Ps. cvii. 1. ¶ *Sing praises unto his name; for* it is *pleasant.* See Ps. xxxiii. 1; xcii. 1. The idea here is, that it is a source of happiness, and that it is proper in itself.

4. *For the* LORD *hath chosen Jacob unto himself.* The descendants of Jacob. He has selected them from among all the inhabitants of the earth to be his peculiar people. ¶ And *Israel for his peculiar treasure.* The word here rendered *treasure,* means that which is acquired; property; wealth. They were what God possessed, owned, or claimed among all the people of the earth as peculiarly his own. He had chosen them; he had redeemed them; he had made them his own, and he regarded them with the interest with which any one looks on his own property, the fruit of his own toil. See Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6; xxxii. 9; 1 Kings viii. 53.

5. *For I know.* I, as the representative of Israel, and speaking in the name of the people. This is said as the foundation or the reason for praise. It was the thorough conviction of the psalmist that God was great above all who were claimed to be gods, and that he only was worthy of worship. ¶ *That the* LORD is *great.* See Notes on Ps. xcv. 3. ¶ *And* that *our Lord* is *above all gods.* All that are worshipped as gods.

6. *Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased.* God is an absolute sovereign. He has formed a plan, and has carried it out. He has made the world as he chose, and he has ordered all its arrangements according to his own pleasure. As a universal sovereign, he has a right to universal adoration. See Notes on Ps. cxv. 3. ¶ *In heaven, and in earth,* etc. These are put for the universe; these *are* the universe. In these places—in all worlds—on the land and in the ocean—even in the profound depths of the sea, there is nothing which has not been placed there by his will, and which he has not arranged according to his eternal plan.

7. *He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.* The word rendered *vapours* means literally *risings;* things *raised up;* and it may be applied, therefore, to vapours or clouds. The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther render it *clouds.* It is among the proofs of the Divine wisdom and power that he causes them to *ascend* contrary to the common law which drags all things down towards the earth. The arrangement by which this is done is among the most wise and wonderful of all the works of God. See Notes on Job xxvi. 8; xxxviii. 25–28. ¶ *He maketh lightnings for the rain.* To accompany the rain. See Notes on Job xxviii. 26. ¶ *He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.* Where he has, as it were, treasured it up, to be used when there should be occasion for it. See Notes on Job xxxviii. 22.

8 Who smote [n] the first-born of Egypt, [1] both of man and beast.
9 *Who* sent tokens [o] and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10 Who [p] smote great nations, and slew mighty kings:
11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

n Ex. xii. 29. [1] *from man unto.*
o Ex. vii., etc.
p Num. xxi. 24—35; Ps. cxxxvi. 17, etc.

12 And gave [q] their land *for* an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.
13 Thy [r] name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever; *and* thy memorial, O LORD, throughout [2] all generations.
14 For [s] the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

q Jos. xii. 1—7; Ps. xliv. 1—3; lxxviii. 55.
r Ex. iii. 15.
[2] *to generation and generation.*
s Deut. xxxii. 36.

8. *Who smote the firstborn of Egypt.* As the last and the greatest of the plagues brought upon the Egyptians; the chief and crowning judgment under which they were made willing that the children of Israel should go, and which was in fact *the* judgment which secured their freedom. This is selected here evidently for this reason, instead of recounting *all* the plagues which were brought upon the Egyptians. ¶ *Both of man and beast.* Ex. xi. 5. Marg., as in Heb., *From man unto beast.* That is, including both; smiting both.

9. Who *sent tokens and wonders.* Tokens:—that is, signs or evidences of the Divine power. Wonders:—things fitted to impress the mind with awe; things outside of the ordinary course of events; things not produced by natural laws, but by the direct power of God. The allusion here is, of course, to the plagues of Egypt, as recorded in Exodus. See Notes on Ps. cv. 27–36.

10. *Who smote great nations,* etc. To wit, those specified in the following verse.

11. *Sihon king of the Amorites,* etc. These are *specimens* of what was done, or *instances* of the mighty kings who were subdued. It is not pretended that all were enumerated. The subjugation of these nations and kings showed the power of God, and laid the foundation for praise.

12. *And gave their land* for *an heritage,* etc. See Notes on Ps. cxi. 6.

13. *Thy name, O* LORD, endureth *for ever.* Thou art the ever-living, the unchanging God. The generations of men pass away; the kingdoms of the earth change; the idols perish, but thou art the same. The object here seems to be to bring the image or the idea of God before the mind as he was *when* he performed these great works, as a God interposing in behalf of his people, and as worthy of praise. The idea is that he is the same now that he was then; and as he then impressed the world with a sense of his majesty and power, and as he then interposed in behalf of his people by mighty signs and wonders, we should feel that, being an unchangeable God, he can do it now, and is now equally worthy of confidence, adoration, and praise. ¶ And *thy memorial.* Thy remembrance; the memory of thyself. That is, What thou hast done to secure a remembrance among men is of such a nature as to make the same impression to all coming time. The events were such that the memory of them should never pass away from mankind. ¶ *Throughout all generations.* Marg., as in Heb., *To generation and generation.* There never will be a generation on the earth, in the latest periods, to which the memory of these things should not be transmitted.

14. *For the* LORD *will judge his people.* He will interpose in their behalf by his judgments, or by di-

15 The [t] idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;

17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.

18 They that make them are like unto them: *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:

20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.

21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

[t] Ps. cxv. 4, etc.; Isa. xliv. 12, etc.

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recting the course of events in their favour. This language is copied literally from Deut. xxxii. 36: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants." It is there a part of the song of Moses after the journey through the wilderness, after smiting the kings of the Amorites and of Bashan; and when, delivered from their enemies, the Israelites had come to the borders of the promised land, Deut. xxxi. The language was, therefore, peculiarly appropriate to the design of this psalm. ¶ *And he will repent himself concerning his servants.* In behalf of his people. That is, he will do *as if* he repented, or had changed his mind. He will stay his judgments. He will not suffer his people to be destroyed. He will not permit the judgments which seemed to threaten their entire ruin to be carried out to the full. They shall be arrested midway *as if* God had then changed his mind. Of course, all this is language accommodated to human weakness, and to the manner of speaking among men.

15–18. *The idols of the heathen* are *silver and gold,* etc. To show more fully the propriety of praising God, and him alone as God, the psalmist instituted a comparison between him and idols, showing that the gods worshipped by the heathen lacked every ground of claim to Divine worship and homage. They were, after all that could be done to fashion, to decorate, and to adorn them, nothing *but* silver and gold, and could have no better claim to worship than silver and gold as such. They had, indeed, mouths, eyes, ears, but they could neither speak, see, hear, nor breathe. The passage here is substantially the same as in Ps. cxv. 4–8; and the one was evidently copied from the other, though in the latter the description is in some respects amplified; but which was the original it is impossible to determine. See Notes on that passage.

19–21. *Bless the* LORD, *O house of Israel,* etc. This passage, also, is evidently an imitation of the passage in Ps. cxv. 9–13. The *form* in Ps. cxv., however, is rather an exhortation to *trust* in the Lord, and an assurance that God *would* bless the classes spoken of, than a call on them to bless the Lord. Still the same classes of persons are referred to;—the house of Israel; the house of Aaron; and those who feared the Lord. The passage needs no further illustration than what is found in the Notes on Ps. cxv. 9–13. It is an earnest call on all classes of the people to bless and praise the Lord. It is language expressive of overflowing joy; the utterance of a heart full of exalted conceptions of the majesty, the glory, and the mercy of God; of a heart which feels to the utmost the fitness of praise, and desires that all classes of men—priests and people,—that all created things should unite in the praise of Jehovah. Who, in reading the psalm, can fail to catch the feelings of the psalmist, and to say AMEN AND AMEN!

PSALM CXXXVI.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* [u] good: for [v] his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 O give thanks unto [w] the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 To him who alone [x] doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

[u] Ps. cxix. 68.

[v] 1 Chron. xvi. 34; 2 Chron. xx. 21.
[w] Deut. x. 17; Dan. ii. 47. [x] Ps. lxxii. 18.

PSALM CXXXVI.

This psalm also has no title to indicate the author, or to explain the occasion on which it was composed. It is a psalm of very peculiar construction, and stands alone in the form of its poetry. The peculiarity consists in repeating at the close of each verse the language "for his mercy endureth for ever." This is a kind of *refrain*, and may have been designed, in public worship, to be a response by a choir, or by the people. That it *may* have been intended to be so used cannot be disproved, nor can any one show that such a response in public worship is, itself, improper or wrong. It is not certain, however, that it was meant to be so used; and it should not, therefore, be appealed to as *proving* that such responses are proper in public worship, whatever may be true on that point. It may have been merely a specimen of the poetic art among the Hebrews,—one of the forms in which Hebrew poetry expressed itself. The subjects referred to as laying the foundation for the response in each verse,—"for his mercy endureth for ever,"—are such as have been often introduced in the previous psalms, and will require but little additional illustration. The general idea is, that *all* these acts of the Divine interposition,—all that God has done, even though it seemed to be a display of power or of justice, of severity or of wrath,—was, in fact, an illustration of the "*mercy*" of God, and laid a foundation for praise. That is, All this was connected with the good of his people, with favours to mankind, with the accomplishment of great and benevolent purposes, and, *therefore*, was expressive of *mercy*,—a proof that the "mercy of God endures for ever."

1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD; *for* he is *good.* This whole verse is the same as Ps. cvi. 1, except that that is introduced by a *Hallelujah.* See Notes on that verse. ¶ *For his mercy* endureth *for ever.* See also Notes on Ps. cvi. 1; cvii. 1. Literally, "For unto eternity his mercy." That is, It is ever the same; it never changes; it is never exhausted; it is found in all his dealings—in all his acts towards his creatures, and ever will be.

2. *O give thanks unto the God of gods.* See Deut. x. 17. The supreme God; the God superior to all that is called God, or that is adored by the nations of the earth; above all to whom the name God is ever applied. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. The ground of praise here is, that it is a characteristic of the supreme God that he is a merciful Being; that there is blended in his character eternal mercy with infinite power. Mere *power* might fill us with dread; power mingled with mercy, and able to carry out the purposes of mercy, must lay the foundation for praise.

3. *O give thanks to the Lord of lords.* The Lord or Ruler of all in authority,—all kings, princes, rulers. He is supreme over all. This is an attribute of Divinity; yet this is ascribed to the Lord Jesus, thus proving that he is Divine. See Notes on Rev. xix. 16. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. The ground of praise here, as in the previous verse, is, that this God,—the Supreme Ruler over all the potentates and magistrates of earth,—is a merciful Being. He is kind and benignant *towards* those rulers, and *through* them to mankind.

4. *To him who alone doeth great wonders.* Miracles; marvellous things; things which spring from his direct and absolute power; things lying beyond the range of natural laws.

5 To him that [y] by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

6 To him that stretched [z] out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever;

8 The sun [1] to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

y Prov. iii. 19. z Gen. i. 9, etc.; Jer. x. 12.

[1] *for the ruling.*

See Notes on Ps. lxxii. 18. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. For all these mighty wonders are performed in carrying out purposes of mercy. So the wonders which were done in Egypt were for the deliverance of an oppressed people; so the miracles performed by the Saviour and his apostles were to remove disease and pain, and to establish a religion of mercy; so the Divine interpositions among the nations are to assert the principles of righteousness, to secure the reign of order and love, and to promote the welfare of mankind.

5. *To him that by wisdom made the heavens.* Made them in so wise a manner; where so much wisdom was manifested. See Prov. iii. 19; viii. 24–31. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. The making of the heavens was a manifestation of mercy and goodness as furnishing an abode for unfallen and holy beings; as a dwelling-place for redeemed sinners when they shall be removed there from the earth; and as, by their order, their beauty, their harmony, and their happy influences, tending to promote the happiness of man on earth.

6. *To him that stretched out the earth above the waters.* Gen. i. 1, 9; see Notes on Ps. xxiv. 2. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. As an illustration of his benignity and kindness in preparing an abode for man, and for other creatures in the world. Whatever there is of life or happiness, on the continents and islands, has resulted from that act of God when "he made the dry land appear."

7. *To him that made great lights.* Gen. i. 14. The sun and the moon are here particularly referred to. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. As manifested in all that has followed from the creation and diffusion of *light*,—(all the beauty in the universe as *seen*; all the life, beauty, and vigour in the vegetable and animal world; all that there *is* of life and happiness in the universe—for there could be neither if darkness reigned everywhere); *light*, the emblem of happiness; the source of joy; the producer, in a great measure, of the beauties of the universe, and the revealer of those beauties everywhere. How *can* a man think of *light* and not praise its Author?

8. *The sun to rule by day.* Gen. i. 16. Marg., as in Heb., *for the ruling of the day.* That is, to control, as it were, the day; to determine its length—its beginning—its ending—to make it what it *is*. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. By all the blessings of day as distinguished from night and darkness,—by all that the sun in his daily course does to diffuse life, joy, peace, comfort, happiness on the earth,—by all that are warmed by its beams, cheered by its light, guided in labour, guarded from dangers,—do we derive an argument for the mercy of God; by all this there is laid a foundation for his praise.

9. *The moon and stars to rule by night.* Gen. i. 16. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. As a proof also of his benignity and mercy. By all the beauty of the moon and stars in their course through the heavens,—by all that there is in the harmony and order of their movements,—by all that there is to make night less hideous and fearful,—by all that there is to reveal a countless number of worlds whose existence could not have been discovered but for the night,—by all that there is to

10 To [a] him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

13 To him which divided [b] the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

15 But [1] overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

a Ps. cxxxv. 8, etc.; Ex. xii. 29.

b Ps. lxxviii. 13. [1] *shaked off.*

guide the mariner on the ocean, enabling him to determine his position and to mark his course when on the deep,—and therefore by all the blessings of navigation and commerce, binding the different parts of the world together,—by all that there is in the "North-star," fixed and true in guiding those who flee from bondage, —by all these and kindred things without number, do we see the benignity, the goodness, the mercy of God, in forming the moon and stars "to rule by night."

10. *To him that smote Egypt in their first-born.* Ex. xii. 29. That is, he struck them down, or destroyed them, by his own direct power. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. It was in mercy to his people. It was the means of their deliverance from bondage, for the Egyptians would not otherwise have suffered them to depart. By all the results of their deliverance both to themselves and to mankind, the act was seen to be an act of mercy to the world. It was better for mankind that the Hebrews should be delivered even at this sacrifice than it would have been that they should *not* be brought into the promised land.

11. *And brought Israel out from among them.* From the land of Egypt. By all the wonders manifested in their deliverance, and in conducting them out of the land so that they should escape from their pursuers. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. His mercy in this respect was to be measured by all that there was of power in conducting them forth in safety, and by the results of it.

12. *With a strong hand.* A powerful hand; as by a hand that could grasp and subdue all that opposed. ¶ *And with a stretched-out arm.* As if the arm were stretched out to strike with the utmost force, or to exert its utmost power. See Ex. vi. 6; Deut. iv. 34; v. 15; vii. 19; xxvi. 8; Jer. xxxii. 21. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. The exertion of his power in delivering his people was the expression of a mercy, the consequences of which are to endure for ever, for the results of that deliverance will never cease in the history of the world; will never cease in heaven.

13. *To him which divided the Red sea into parts.* More literally, "Parted it into parts;" made parts of that which before was unbroken and a whole. It was actually divided into *two* parts, so that the Hebrews passed between them: Ex. xiv. 21, 22. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. This, too, was an exercise of mercy, or a manifestation of benevolence toward them and toward the world, to be measured by all the good which would result from it in itself, and by all the power which was put forth to effect it.

14. *And made Israel to pass through the midst of it.* Ex. xiv. 29. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. The mercy manifested in keeping the waves from returning on them and overwhelming them.

15. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea.* Marg., as in Heb., *shaked off.* The word is applicable to a tree shaking off its foliage. Isa. xxxiii. 9. The same word is used in Ex. xiv. 27: "And the Lord overthrew (Marg., *shook off*) the Egyptians in the midst of the sea."

16 To him which led [c] his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

18 And [d] slew famous kings; for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

19 Sihon [e] king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

21 And gave [f] their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

22 *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

23 Who remembered [g] us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

c Ex. xiii. 18; Deut. viii. 15.
d Deut. xxix. 7. *e* Num. xxi. 21, 23.
f Jos. xii. 1, etc.
g Deut. xxxii. 36; Luke i. 48.

He shook them off as if he would no longer protect them. He left them to perish. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. Their destruction was wrought in mercy to his people and to the world; for it was the means of deliverance to Israel. The death of a wicked man is a benefit to the world, and the act of removing him may be really an act of the highest benevolence to mankind. No wrong is done to such men, for they deserve to die; and the only service which can be rendered to the world through them is by their removal from the earth.

16. *To him which led his people through the wilderness.* For all the manifestations of his care during a period of forty years. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. That is, his mercy was to be measured by all the protection extended over them; by all the provision made for their wants; by all that God did to defend them; by all his interposition when attacked by their enemies; by safely bringing them to the land to which he had promised to conduct them.

17–22. *To him which smote great kings.* On this passage see Notes on Ps. cxxxv. 10–12. There is little difference in the two places, except that here the statement is divided by the *refrain*, "For his mercy endureth for ever." The idea in the whole passage, in view of the Divine interposition in slaying the mighty kings, and in giving their land for a possession to the Hebrew people, is, that it was a proof of mercy and benevolence. It is benevolence to mankind and to the church of God,—it is in the interests of humanity, of domestic peace, and of the charities of life, to remove wicked men from the world. This mercy may be manifested further, not merely in removing the wicked, but in transferring their possessions to those who will make a better use of them. Thus the possessions of these mighty kings, Sihon and Og, were transferred to the people of God, and lands which had been devoted to the service of blood, ambition, crime, pollution, and idolatry, became devoted to the service of religion and righteousness. In like manner, through the removal of a wicked man from the world by death, God may cause his wealth, accumulated by avarice and dishonesty, to be transferred to the hands of children who will make a good use of it—children converted as if in anticipation of this, and with a view to this. Among the highest expressions of mercy to the world may be, therefore, the removal of wicked princes in war,—or the removal of wicked men, in other ranks of life, by death in any form.

23. *Who remembered us in our low estate.* When we were few in number; when we were a feeble people; when we were a people unable to contend with such mighty foes. ¶ *For his mercy*, etc. By all that he did for us *when* thus feeble; by all his power put forth to defend us from our enemies, he has showed his mercy and kindness to us and to the world.

24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25 Who [h] giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

[h] Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.

24. *And hath redeemed us from our enemies.* Has rescued or delivered us from all our foes; has given to us freedom and peace. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. By all that he has done in order to redeem us; and by all the prosperity, happiness, and peace which have followed as the result of that, he has showed his mercy. So it is in the greater work of the redemption of the soul. By all the love manifested in the gift of a Saviour,—by all the sufferings and toils of his life,—by his "agony and bloody sweat" in the garden of Gethsemane,—by his "cross and passion,"—by all the blessings of salvation here, all our peace, all our purity, all our consolations, all our hopes, and by all the glories of heaven hereafter,—the mercy of God in our redemption is to be estimated and measured. Who can take the full account of it?

25. *Who giveth food to all flesh.* To all living things:—all in the air, on the earth, in the waters. See Notes on Ps. civ. 27, 28; comp. Ps. cxv. 16. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. All this is a proof of his benignity and kindness. To see this, it would be necessary to have a view of what is *done* every day in the providence of God to meet the wants of the countless multitudes thus dependent on him. Let it be remembered, also, that the wants of *each* insect, fowl, animal, fish, is to be provided for *as an individual,*—and who can take in a full view of the care, the wisdom, the benevolence of what is done every day by the Father of all in providing for their wants? Let it be remembered, also, that this has been continued without ceasing from the foundation of the world, and will be demanded until its close, and then let us try to imagine what is necessary to be done to provide for the wants of all the dwellers in distant worlds,—and who, in this view, can form any proper estimate of the wisdom and the goodness of God?

26. *O give thanks unto the God of heaven.* The God who reigns in heaven; whose home is heaven. ¶ *For his mercy,* etc. In view of all this—of all that he does in heaven and on earth—let praise be ascribed to him. To know the measure of the praise due to him; to see how great is his "mercy," it would be necessary to know *all* that he does in heaven and on earth. That will not be known here. It will constitute the theme of contemplation and praise for ever and ever. Enough, however, *is* known here to show the propriety of repeating again, again, and again, as in this psalm, the language, "For his mercy endureth for ever;" "For his mercy endureth for ever;" "For his mercy endureth for ever."

PSALM CXXXVII.

Though there is no title prefixed to this beautiful psalm, and no direct intimation as to the occasion on which it was composed, yet there can be no doubt as to the circumstances in which it was written. There is, indeed, no mention of the name of the author, and no possibility of recovering that name now, but there can be no doubt that it was composed by one of the exiles in Babylon,—one who had witnessed and shared the sufferings of the exiles there, and who had also a lively recollection of the wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was attacked and destroyed by its foes. The writer was a *Jew* to the heart's core; an "Hebrew of the Hebrews;" embodying and expressing in this short psalm all that there was which was peculiar in Hebrew feeling, patriotism, devotion. Nowhere else in a short compass is so much *Judaism*—so much Jewish piety—to be found concentrated as in this psalm. There is grief at their lonely

PSALM CXXXVII.

BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

and desolate condition in Babylon; profound and submissive silence in the midst of their troubles; indignation that they should be taunted and derided by their captors; a strong—earnest—supreme love for their native land; deep resentment at the remembrance of the many wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was destroyed; and an earnest invocation to God that he would remember those wrongs alike in relation to Edom and Babylon, and treat those wrongdoers as they deserved. It would seem most probable that the psalm was composed soon after the return from Babylon, and before the temple was finished, —while the ruins of the city caused by the Edomites and Babylonians were visible everywhere. The combined remembrance of the insults in Babylon, and of the wrong done to the city at its capture, animates the poet, and fills his mind with this deep and burning indignation.

1. *By the rivers of Babylon.* The streams, the water-courses, the rivulets. There was properly only one river flowing through Babylon,—the Euphrates; but the city was watered, as Damascus now is, by means of canals or water-courses cut from the main river, and conveying the water to different parts of the city. For a description of Babylon, see the introductory Notes to Isaiah, ch. xiii. If the reference here is to *Babylon proper*, or the city, the allusion would be to the Euphrates flowing through it; if to Babylonia, the allusion would be to the Euphrates, and the other rivers which watered the country, as the Tigris, the Chaboras, and the Ulai. As it is most probable that the captive Hebrews were not scattered through the empire, but were concentrated in one or a few places, it is, perhaps, not improper to understand this of Babylon itself. ¶ *There we sat down.* There we were sitting. Perhaps a little company of friends; perhaps those assembled for worship; perhaps those who happened to come together on some special occasion; or, perhaps, a poetic representation of the general condition of the Hebrew captives, as sitting and meditating on the desolations of their native land. ¶ *Yea, we wept.* We sat there; we meditated; we wept. Our emotions overpowered us, and we poured forth tears. So now, there is a place in Jerusalem, at the south-west corner of the area on which the temple was built, where the Jews resort on set occasions to weep over the ruins of their city and nation. ¶ *When we remembered Zion.* When we thought on our native land; its former glory; the wrongs done to it; the desolations there; when we thought of the temple in ruins, and our homes as devastated; when we thought of the happy days which we had spent there, and when we contrasted them with our condition now.

2. *We hanged our harps upon the willows.* The harps once used to accompany the songs of praise and the service of God in the temple; the harps with which they had sought to beguile their weary hours, and to console their sad spirits in their captivity. The word rendered *willows* —עַרְבִים, *arabim*—used only in the plural, denotes the willow or *osier*, so called from its white, silvery leaves. Gesenius, *Lex.* Comp. Isa. xv. 7. It is probable that the weeping willow —the willow with long pendulous branches—is here referred to. Trees in desert lands spring up along the courses of the streams, and appear, in the wide desolation, as long and waving lines of green wherever the rivers wind along. The course of a stream can thus be marked by the prolonged line of meandering green in the desert as far as the eye can reach. It has been objected to the statement here that the *willow* is not now found in the neighbourhood of ancient Babylon, but that the palm

3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us [1] a song: and they that [2] wasted [i] us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.

4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a [3] strange land?

[1] *the words of a song.* [2] *laid us on heaps* [i] Ps. lxxix. 1. [3] *land of a stranger.*

is the only tree which grows there. I saw, however, in 1852, in St. James's Park in London, a willow-tree with a label on it, stating that it was taken from the site of ancient Babylon; and there seems no reason to doubt the correctness of the account. The willow may be less abundant there now than it was in former times, as is true of the palm-tree in Palestine, but there is no reason to doubt that it grew there. All that the psalm, however, would necessarily demand in a fair interpretation would be that there should have been even a single clump of these trees planted there, under which a little band of exiles may have seated themselves when they gave utterance to the plaintive language of this psalm. ¶ *In the midst thereof.* In the midst of Babylon; showing that this referred to the city proper. They could not sing, such was their grief, though they had their harps with them; and they hung them up, therefore, on the branches of the trees around them;—or, poetically, they were as dumb *as if* they had hung up their harps there.

3. *For there they that carried us away captive.* The Babylonians. ¶ *Required of us a song.* Asked of us a song. The word does not express the idea of compulsion or force. Marg., as in Heb., *words of a song.* Perhaps the idea is that they did not merely ask *music*, but they wished to hear the *words*—the songs themselves—in which they were accustomed to praise God. This *may* have been a taunt, and the request may have been in derision; or it may have been seriously, and with no desire to reproach them, or to add to their sorrows. We are not to impute bad motives to others where there is no evidence that there are any, and where the supposition of good motives will answer just as well; and the expression here may have been a kind and natural wish to hear the songs of these foreigners,—songs of which they might have heard much by report; perhaps songs which they had *overheard* them singing when they were in a less desponding state of mind, and when they sought to comfort themselves by these ancient national melodies. As the only reason assigned for *not* complying with this request was that they *could* not "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" (ver. 3), we are rather led to infer that there was no bad motive—no disposition to taunt and ridicule them by the request that was made. ¶ *And they that wasted us.* Marg., *laid us on heaps.* The Hebrew word means a tormentor; properly, one who extorts lamentation from others, or who causes them to howl,—to wit, under oppression or wrong. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "They who led us away." The general idea is, those under whom they were then suffering; or, who had caused these trials to come upon them. ¶ Required of us *mirth.* Literally, "Our tormentors, joy." The Hebrew word means *joy;* and the sense is, that they asked them to give the usual indications of joy and happiness—to wit, a song. The language means, "Cheer up; be happy; give us one of the beautiful songs which you were accustomed to sing in your own land." It *may*, indeed, have been in derision; but there is no proof that it was. ¶ Saying, *Sing us* one *of the songs of Zion.* The songs—the sacred hymns—which you were accustomed to sing in worship in your own land.

4. *How shall we sing the* LORD'S *song.* The song designed to celc-

5 If [k] I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning.*

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer [l] not Jerusalem above [1] my chief joy.

[k] Dan. vi. 10. [l] Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

[1] *the head of my joy.*

brate his praise; that is, appropriate to the worship of Jehovah. ¶ *In a strange land.* Far from our home; far from the temple; exiles; captives:—how *can* we find spirit in such circumstances to sing? How can we do that which would be indicative of what we do not feel, and cannot feel,—joy and happiness! The idea is not that those psalms or songs would be profaned by being sung there, or that there would be anything improper in itself in singing them, but that it would be misplaced and incongruous to sing them in their circumstances. It would be doing violence to their own feelings; their feelings would not allow them to do it. There are states of mind when the language of joy is appropriate and natural; there are states where the heart is so sad that it cannot sing.

5. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem.* The meaning here is, that to sing in such circumstances would *seem* to imply that they had forgotten Jerusalem; that they were unmindful of its sorrows, and cared not that it was desolate. The remembrance of its calamities pressed hard upon them, and they could not do anything which would seem to imply that they had become unmindful of the sufferings that had come upon their nation. One will not make merry when a wife or child lies dying,—or on the day of the funeral,—or over the grave of a mother. A gay and brilliant party, accompanied with music, feasting, dancing, when a friend has been just laid in the grave, when the calamities of war are abroad, when the pestilence is raging in a city, we feel to be untimely, unseemly, and incongruous. So these captives said it would be if they should make merry while their temple was in ruins; while their city was desolate; while their people were captives in a foreign land. ¶ *Let my right hand forget* her cunning. Let my right hand forget its skill in music—all its skill. If I should now play on the harp—as indicative of joy—let the hand which would be employed in sweeping over its strings become paralyzed and powerless. Let the punishment come where it would seem to be deserved—on the hand which *could* play at such a time. So Cranmer held the hand which had been employed in signing a recantation of his faith in the fire, until it was burned off, and dropped in the flames.

6. *If I do not remember thee.* Equivalent to, "If I forget thee." If I ever fail to remember thee; if I shall ever act as if I had forgotten thee. Singing in a strange land, among those who had perpetrated such wrongs in thee,—appearing to be happy, cheerful, joyous, gay, merry there,—would be understood to imply that I had ceased to remember thee, and cared nothing for thee. ¶ *Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.* Comp. Ezek. iii. 26. Let me be unable to speak; let my tongue be as it were attached to the upper part of the mouth, so that it could not be used. If I employ it in an unworthy purpose,—in any way whereby it can be inferred that I have ceased to remember my native land, and the city of our solemnities, let my tongue be ever after useless. This language is often employed by Virgil: Vox faucibus hæsit. ¶ *If I prefer not Jerusalem.* Literally, "If I do not cause to ascend." That is, If I do not exalt Jerusalem in my estimation above everything that gives me pleasure; if I do not find my supreme happiness in that. ¶ *Above my chief*

7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, [1] Rase *it*, rase *it*, *even* to the foundation thereof.

[1] *make bare.*

joy. Marg., as in Heb., *the head of my joy*. The chief thing which gives me joy; as the head is the chief, or is supreme over the body. This is expressive of a great truth in regard to religion. Anything else—everything else—is to be sooner sacrificed than that. The happiness which is found in religion is superior to that found in every other source of enjoyment, and is preferred to every other. If either is to be sacrificed—the joy of religion, or the pleasure derived from society, from the gay world, from literature, from music, from dancing, from works of art—it will be the latter and not the former. There are other sources of joy which are not in any way inconsistent with religion:—the joy of friendship; of domestic life; of honourable pursuits; of the esteem of men. So of music, the arts, gardens, literature, science. But when one interferes with the other, or is inconsistent with the other, the joy of the world is to be sacrificed to the joy of religion. When the joy of religion is sacrificed *for* the joy of the world, it proves that there is no true piety in the soul. Religion, if it exists at all, will always be supreme.

7. *Remember, O* LORD, *the children of Edom.* The Edomites; the people of Idumea. On the situation of Edom or Idumea, see introductory Notes to Isa. xxxiv. ¶ *In the day of Jerusalem.* In the day when Jerusalem shall be restored; in the day when punishment shall be inflicted on the nations that destroyed it;—then, do not forget the Edomites, who took so large and so active a part in its overthrow. This is to be understood as a continued "*remembrance*" of Zion; as a purpose not to "forget" Jerusalem. The psalmist, representing the feelings of the captives in Babylon, says, that so far from doing anything which would imply a forgetfulness of their native land,—as singing cheerful songs there might be understood to be,—they would do *everything* to call Jerusalem to remembrance. They would remember her former splendour; they would remember her desolations; *they would go further*—they would not forget those who had brought these calamities upon her; those who had done most for her overthrow. As among the most prominent, they would remember particularly the ancient enemies of their nation—the Edomites—who had been among the most active in its destruction, and who had united with the Babylonians in the work of ruin. They would remember all this; and they prayed God that *he* also would remember the desolation itself, and all the *actors* in that work of desolation. ¶ *Who said.* Implying that they had been associated with the Babylonians in the destruction of the city. On the hostility of that people to the Hebrews, and the grounds of their hostility,—and on their agency as united with the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem, and the Divine vengeance threatened them on that account,—see, as above, the introd. to Isa. xxxiv. ¶ *Rase* it, *rase* it. Marg., as in Heb., *make bare.* That is, Strip it of everything,—temple, houses, ornaments, fountains,—and leave it *a bare and naked rock.* Let nothing remain but the rocks—the foundations—on which it is built. In the history of the Edomites, as stated in the introd. to Isa. xxxiv., there were abundant facts to show that they were particularly zealous and active in seeking the destruction of the hated city. This verse and the one following constitute a portion of the "imprecatory" Psalms; of those which seem to cry for vengeance, and to manifest a revengeful and unforgiving spirit; the portion of the Psalms which has been regarded as so difficult to be reconciled with the forgiving spirit enjoined

8 O daughter of Babylon, who [m] art to be [1] destroyed; happy *shall he be* that [2] rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

9 Happy *shall he be* that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the [3] stones.

[m] Isa. xiii. 1, etc.; Rev. xviii. 6. [1] *wasted.* [2] *recompenseth unto thee thy deed which thou didst to us.* [3] *rock.*

in the gospel. On this subject, see General Introd., § 6.

8. *O daughter of Babylon.* That is, Babylon itself; the city of Babylon. On the word "*daughter*" as thus used, see Notes on Isa. i. 8. ¶ *Who art to be destroyed.* Certainly to be destroyed; of whose destruction there are fixed and absolute prophecies. See Notes on Isa. xiii. 19–22. ¶ *Happy* shall he be *that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.* Marg., *that recompenseth unto thee thy deed which thou didst to us.* Literally, "Happy shall he be who shall repay to thee the recompence which thou hast recompensed unto us." The idea is, Who shall repay thee for thy treatment of us; or, as we should say in common language, "Who shall pay thee back?" That is, he will be esteemed a fortunate man who is made the instrument of inflicting deserved punishment on a city so guilty and so cruel. He will acquire fame and honour by doing it; his name will be made known abroad and perpetuated among men. In fact, the name of Cyrus, who conquered Babylon, *is* among the names of the most celebrated of conquerors; and the manner in which he took Babylon and overthrew the government and kingdom, has given him a most eminent place among successful princes and conquerors.

9. *Happy* shall he be *that taketh*, etc. Marg., as in Heb., *rock.* This refers to what was not uncommon in ancient warfare, as it is now among savage tribes, — the indiscriminate slaughter of those of all ages, and of both sexes, in war. It was expressly foretold of Babylon that this would occur (see Isa. xiii. 16, and the Notes on that place), and there may be a reference here to that prediction, and the psalmist may mean to say that the man would be accounted happy, or would be happy, who wreaked vengeance on Babylon in carrying out that prophecy. The idea is, "This will certainly occur, for it is foretold, and happy or fortunate will he be who is the instrument in fulfilling it." Comp. 2 Kings viii. 12; Nahum iii. 10; Hos. xiii. 16. See also Homer, Il. xxii. 63, 373, *seq.* It is impossible to reconcile such barbarous customs with the idea of "honourable war," or with the principles of war as carried on among "civilized" nations now. It should be added, however, that there is much—very much—that *is* practised in war by "civilized" nations still, which it is equally *impossible* to reconcile with any just notions of morality or humanity, and which in coming ages, and when men shall come to view things aright, will seem to the people of those times to be not less monstrous, strange, and barbarous. In regard to this passage, we are not *necessarily* to suppose that the author of the psalm approved of this, or desired it, or prayed for it. He looked forward to the fulfilment of a prediction; he saw that a just and terrible judgment would certainly come upon Babylon; he expressed that in the common language of the times, and states the manner in which it would occur; he described the feelings—the gratification—of those who would execute the Divine purpose in the overthrow of Babylon; he referred to the estimate in which the conqueror would be held by men, and the glory of the achievement as giving him fame among men. It must be admitted that the feelings of the author of the psalm appear to accord with this; that he considers it proper that the city should be destroyed; and that he regards its overthrow as a righteous judgment, and

PSALM CXXXVIII.

A Psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for

as a thing to be desired in the Divine administration. It is true that he *might* approve of such an overthrow, and see it to be right,—he *might* describe the feelings of those by whom it would be wrought, *their* joy, *their* exultation, and even their barbarity, without himself approving of their barbarity, or sympathising with their feelings, or partaking of their spirit; but still it cannot in fairness be denied that there is an apparent approval of the act here referred to, which savours more of imprecation than forgiveness, and which is apparently prompted more by the spirit of revenge than by a desire of just punishment. On this subject, however, see General Introd., § 6 (4); and Notes on Ps. cix. 10. A correct *record* may be made, whether of facts or of feelings, without any design of expressing either approbation or disapprobation on the part of the historian, the prophet, or the poet.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

This is the first of a series of *eight* psalms (Ps. cxxxviii.-cxlv.), placed together in this part of the book, and ascribed to David. They appear to be of the nature of a *supplement* to the Book of Psalms, composed of psalms unknown to the original collector and arranger of the book, and subsequently discovered and ascertained to be the works of David. It is not to be regarded as strange that there should be psalms of this nature composed by David at different periods of his life, which might have been preserved in different branches of his family, and which might not have been generally known to exist. It is rare that the works of an author, especially a poet, are collected and published, and that things of this kind—fugitive and occasional pieces—are not subsequently found; nor is it very unusual that such pieces may, after all, be among the most tender, touching, and beautiful of his compositions. Burns's "Highland Mary," so much admired, and his "When wild War's deadly blast was blown,"—a poem which no one can read without tears,—with not a few others of his, are of this description. They are said, in his Biography, to have been "extracted from the *correspondence* of Burns." (Works of Robert Burns, Philad., 1834, pp. 76, 85, 89.)

The occasion on which this psalm was composed cannot now be determined. It was evidently written in view of trouble (vers. 3, 7), and it expresses confidence that God would interpose in the future in behalf of the author, as he had done in the past; and it is, therefore, adapted to inspire confidence and hope in all who are called to pass through scenes of trial. The psalm does not admit of any particular analysis.

1. *I will praise thee with my whole heart.* Reserving nothing in my heart to give to idols or to other gods. All that constitutes praise to God as God, he would address to him alone. He would use no language, and cherish no feeling, which implied a belief that there was any other God; he would indulge in no attachment which would be inconsistent with supreme attachment to God, or which would tend to draw away his affections from him. See Notes on Ps. ix. 1. ¶ *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.* The idols; all idols;—in preference to them all. This does not mean that he would do this *in the presence* of other gods; but that Jehovah should be acknowledged to be God *in preference* to any or all of them.

2. *I will worship.* I will bow down and adore. ¶ *Toward thy holy temple.* See Notes on Ps. v. 7. The word *temple* here undoubtedly refers to the tabernacle. ¶ *And praise thy name for thy loving-kindness.* Praise thee for thy benignity; thy mercy; thy benevolence. ¶ *And for thy truth.*

thy truth: for [n] thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.

[n] Isa. xlii. 21.

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great *is* the glory of the LORD.

Thy truthfulness; thy faithfulness to thy promises. ¶ *For thou hast magnified thy word.* Thou hast made it great. Comp. Isa. xlii. 21. The reference here is to the promises of God, and especially to the promise which God had made to David that the Messiah would descend from him. Comp. 2 Sam. vii. ¶ *Above all thy name.* Above all else that thou hast done; above all the other manifestations of thyself to me or to the world. The word *name* here would refer properly to all that God had done to make himself known,—since it is by the *name* that we designate or distinguish any one; and, thus understood, the meaning would be, that the word of God—the revelation which he has made of himself and of his gracious purposes to mankind—is superior in clearness, and in importance, to all the other manifestations which he has made of himself; all that can be known of him in his works. Beyond all question there are higher and clearer manifestations of himself, of his being, of his perfection, of his purposes, in the volume of revelation, than any which his works have disclosed or can disclose. Comp. Ps. xix. There are very many points in relation to God, of the highest interest to mankind, on which the disclosures of science shed no light; there are many things which it is desirable for man to know, which cannot be learned in the schools of philosophy; there are consolations which man needs in a world of trouble which cannot be found in nature; there is especially a knowledge of the method by which sin may be pardoned, and the soul saved, which can never be disclosed by the blow-pipe, the telescope, or the microscope. These things, if learned at all, must be learned from revelation, and these are of more importance to man as a traveller to another world than all the learning which can be acquired in the schools of philosophy—valuable as that learning is.

3. *In the day when I cried.* Referring to some former period of his life when he was in trouble. ¶ *Thou answeredst me.* In the very day when I called, thou gavest me the answer:—that is, immediately. ¶ And *strengthenedst me* with *strength in my soul.* Literally, "Thou didst embolden,—or, didst make me courageous with strength." Thou didst enable me to meet danger, and to overcome fear. It would seem probable that this was on some occasion when he was in danger from his enemies.

4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise thee,* etc. That is, kings, princes, and rulers shall learn the words of promise; shall be made acquainted with the words which thou hast graciously spoken, and with their fulfilment, and shall be led to praise thee. This refers to a time, of which frequent prophetic mention is made in the Scriptures, when kings and rulers shall be converted to the true religion, and when they shall act an important part, by their example and influence, in maintaining and diffusing it. Comp. Ps. lxviii. 31, 32; Isa. xlix. 23.

5. *Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the* LORD. In the ways which God has appointed. They shall join with all that love him—with the humblest of the people—in acknowledging God. Kings and people shall thus bow before God in common acts of praise, and as being on the same level before him. As men, as sinners, as redeemed, as travelling to the grave, they are

6 Though [o] the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

7 Though [p] I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

8 The LORD will perfect [q] *that which* concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

o Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 1, 2; 1 Pet. v. 5.
p Micah vii. 8, 9.
q Phil. i. 6; 1 Thess. v. 24.

all alike before God. ¶ *For great* is *the glory of the* LORD. Great is his character; great his dignity; great his honour; and all this will be seen to be so when those of most exalted rank thus worship and adore him. The most lofty on earth shall acknowledge that there is one who is more exalted than they are, and their own dignity and splendour shall thus contribute to deepen the impression of the honour and glory of God.

6. *Though the* LORD be *high.* This might be rendered "For lofty is Jehovah—and the humble he sees—and the proud he knows from afar." The idea is, that God—so high and exalted—sees and knows all of every rank among men. The mind of the psalmist had been impressed with a sense of the greatness and majesty of God, but (as if it might be said that one so great could not regard man, so humble and insignificant) he adds, that the fact of God's exaltation does not prevent his noticing the affairs of men: that the lowly in life need not fear lest they should be overlooked; the proud need not hope that they will escape the notice of his eye. ¶ *Yet hath he respect unto the lowly.* Those in humble life; the obscure; the unknown. It does not mean here that he has any special favour towards them, but merely that he *sees* them. Their low and obscure condition does not prevent his observing them, and they need have no fear that he will overlook them, or that they will be forgotten. Comp. Notes on James iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5. ¶ *But the proud.* Those of lofty rank, and of lofty feelings;—the haughty. ¶ *He knoweth afar off.* From afar. Though he is exalted,—though he is in heaven,—yet he is not so far removed but that he sees them, and knows them altogether. Distance from him is no protection for them; nor can the wicked hope to escape notice from the fact that God reigns over distant worlds.

7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble.* Though *I* am in the low vale of sorrow, I shall not be overlooked or forgotten. This implies that the writer was *then* in trouble, and it expresses the conviction that *whenever* he should be in trouble God would remember him, and give him life and strength. ¶ *Thou wilt revive me.* Thou wilt cause me *to live;* thou wilt give me life. Ps. xxx. 3. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxi. 20. The meaning is, Thou wilt give me life—vigour—strength—to bear the trouble. ¶ *Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand.* As one does when he is about to inflict a blow. ¶ *Against the wrath of mine enemies,* etc. In reference to all their attempts to destroy me. Thou wilt meet their wrath by thy power, and I shall be safe.

8. *The* LORD *will perfect* that which *concerneth me.* He will complete what he has begun. He will not begin to interpose in my behalf, and then abandon me. He will not promise to save me, and then fail to fulfil his promise. He will not encourage me, and then cast me off. So of us. He will complete what he begins. He will not convert a soul, and then leave it to perish. "Grace will complete what grace begins." See Notes on Phil i. 6. ¶ *Thy mercy, O* LORD, endureth *for ever.* See Notes on Ps. cxxxvi. 1. ¶ *Forsake not the works of thine own hands.* What thou hast

PSALM CXXXIX.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, thou hast searched [r] me, and known *me*.

[r] Jer. xvii. 10; Rev. ii. 23.

made; what thou hast begun to do. Do not leave *me* to perish. Prayer is one of the means—and an *essential* means—by which the saints are to be kept unto salvation. The doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints" is not inconsistent with prayer, but rather prompts to it; and he who professes to rely on that doctrine, and feels so safe that he does not need to pray, and does *not* pray, gives certain evidence that he has never been converted, and has no true religion.

PSALM CXXXIX.

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that it is properly attributed to him. See introd. to Ps. cxxxviii. At what time it was composed is, however, unknown. It contains reflections which might have occurred at any period of his life; yet it would seem most probable that it was not written in his early years, but that it is a record of his most mature thoughts on a great and very important subject.

The psalm relates to the omnipresence of God, and contains such reflections as would occur to one meditating on that attribute of the Deity. It is the most distinct and full statement of that doctrine which is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the doctrine is presented in language which has never been surpassed for sublimity and beauty. The leading idea in the psalm seems to be that of *comfort* from the fact that God is everywhere; that he knows all that pertains to us; that we can never be hidden from his view; that he has known us from the beginning; that as he fashioned and formed us—making us what we are—he knows all our necessities, and can supply them.

The psalm consists of three parts:—

I. A celebration of the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God, as a ground of confidence and hope, vers. 1–18.

(*a*) The fact that he knows all that there is in the heart, vers. 1–6.

(*b*) The fact that he is everywhere present, vers. 7–12.

(*c*) The fact that all in our past life has been known to God; that he has created us, and that his eye has been upon us from the beginning of our existence, vers. 13–16.

(*d*) The fact that his thoughts towards us are precious, and numberless as the sand, vers. 17, 18.

II. The feelings of the psalmist in relation to the acts of the wicked as a proof that he loved God, vers. 19–22. These reflections seem to have sprung from his contemplation of the Divine character and perfections, as leading him to hate all that was opposed to a Being so pure, so benevolent, so holy. On looking into his own heart, in view of what God was, he was conscious that he had no sympathy with the enemies of God as such; that such was his love for the character of God, and such his confidence in him, that he could have nothing in common with them in their feelings towards God, but wished to be dissociated from them for ever.

III. The expression of a desire that, as God saw all the recesses of the human soul, he would search *his* heart, and would detect *any* evil he might see there, and deliver him from the evil, and lead him in the way which conducted to life eternal, vers. 23, 24. Any one may feel, and must feel, that after all which he knows of himself,—after all the effort which he makes to ascertain what is within his heart,—there are depths there which his eye cannot penetrate, and that there may be sins of thought and feeling there which he has not detected; but it is only from the consciousness of sincerity, and a true desire to honour God, that one can pray that *God* would search him, and that he would detect and bring out every form of sin which *he* may see concealed and lurking in the soul. He who can sincerely offer this prayer is a pious man.

1. *O* LORD, *thou hast searched me.* The word rendered *searched*, has a primary reference to searching the earth by boring or digging, as for water or metals. See Job xxviii. 3. Then it means to search accurately

2 Thou [s] knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou [t] understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou [1] compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.

[s] 2 Kings vi. 12; xix. 27.

4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou [u] knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

[t] Ps. xciv. 11; Ezek. xi. 5.
[1] Or, *winnowest.*
[u] Mal. iii. 13, 16.

or closely. ¶ *And known* me. As the result of that search, or that close investigation. Thou seest all that is in my heart. Nothing is, or can be, concealed from thee. It is with this deep consciousness that the psalm begins; and all that follows is but an expansion and application of this idea. It is of much advantage in suggesting right reflections on our own character, to have this full consciousness that God knows us altogether; that he sees all that there is in our heart; that he has been fully acquainted with our past life.

2. *Thou knowest my downsitting*, etc. In the various circumstances of life, thou knowest me. Thou knowest me in one place as well as in another. I cannot so change my position that thou will not see me, and that thou wilt not be perfectly acquainted with all that I say, and all that I do. In every posture, in every movement, in every occupation, thou hast a full knowledge of me. I cannot go out of thy sight; I cannot put myself into such a position that thou wilt not see me. ¶ *Thou understandest my thought.* Heb., As to my thought. That is, Thou seest what my plans are; what I design to do; *what I am thinking about.* A most solemn reflection! How unwilling would bad men be—would even good men be—to have those round about them know always *what they are thinking about.* ¶ *Afar off.* Not when the *thought* is far off; but *thou*, being far off, seest us as clearly as if thou wert near. I cannot go to such a distance from thee that thou wilt not see perfectly all that I am thinking about.

3. *Thou compassest my path*, etc. Marg., *winnowest.* The Hebrew word—זָרָה, *zarah*—means properly *to scatter*, to cast loosely about—as the wind does dust; and then, to winnow,—to wit, by throwing grain, when it is thrashed, up to the wind: Isa. xxx. 24; Jer. iv. 11; Ruth iii. 2. Then it means *to winnow out*; that is, to winnow out all the chaff, and to leave all the grain—to save all that is valuable. So here it means that God, as it were, *sifted* him. Comp. Isa. xxx. 28; Amos ix. 9; Luke xxii. 31. He scattered all that was chaff, or all that was valueless, and saw what there was that was real and substantial. When it is said that he did this in his "path and his lying down," it is meant that he did it in every way; altogether; entirely. ¶ *And art acquainted* with *all my ways.* All the paths that I tread; the whole course of my life. All that I do, in all places and at all times, is fully known to thee.

4. *For* there is *not a word in my tongue.* All that I say; all that I have power to say; all that I am disposed at any time to say. ¶ But *lo, O* LORD, *thou knowest it altogether.* All that pertains to it. What is *said*, and what is *meant.* Merely to *hear* what is spoken does not imply necessarily a full knowledge of what is said,—for it may be false, insincere, hypocritical. God knows exactly what is *said* and what is *meant.*

5. *Thou hast beset me behind and before.* The word rendered *beset*—צוּר, *tzur*—means properly to press; to press upon; to compress. It has reference commonly to the siege of a city, or to the pressing on of troops in war; and then it comes to mean to besiege, hem in, closely surround,

6 *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.

7 Whither [v] shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

[v] Jer. xxiii. 24; Jonah i. 3. [w] Amos ix. 2—4.

8 If I [w] ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, [x] behold, thou *art there.*

9 *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:

[x] Job xxvi. 6; Prov. xv. 11.

so that there is no way of escape. This is the idea here,—that God was on every side of him; that he could not escape in any direction. He was like a garrison besieged in a city so that there was no means of escape. There is a transition here (not an unnatural one), from the idea of the *Omniscience* of God to that of his *Omnipresence,* and the remarks which follow have a main reference to the latter. ¶ *And laid thine hand upon me.* That is, If I try to escape in any direction I find thine hand laid upon me there. Escape is impossible.

6. Such *knowledge* is *too wonderful for me.* Literally, "Wonderful knowledge away from me," or, more than I can comprehend. It is beyond my reach; it surpasses all my powers to comprehend it. ¶ *It is high, I cannot* attain *unto it.* It is so exalted that I cannot grasp it; I cannot understand how it can be.

7. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit?* Where shall I go where thy spirit is not; that is, where thou art not; where there is no God. The word *spirit* here does not refer particularly to the Holy Spirit, but to God *as* a spirit. "Whither shall I go from the all-pervading Spirit—from God, considered as a spirit?" This is a clear statement that God is a "Spirit" (comp. John iv. 24); and that, as a spirit, he is Omnipresent. ¶ *Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Heb., From his face; that is, where he will not be, and will not see me. I cannot find a place—a spot in the universe, where there is not a God, and the same God. Fearful thought to those that hate him—that, much as they may wish or desire it, they can never find a place where there is not a holy God! Comforting to those that love him—that they will never be where they may not find a God,—their God; that nowhere, at home or abroad, on land or on the ocean, on earth or above the stars, they will ever reach a world where they will not be in the presence of that God — that gracious Father — who can defend, comfort, guide, and sustain them.

8. *If I ascend up into heaven.* The word *heaven* here, in the original is in the plural number—*heavens,*—and includes all that there is above the earth—the highest worlds. ¶ *If I make my bed.* Properly, "If I strew or spread my couch." If I should seek that as the place where to lie down. ¶ *In hell.* Heb., *Sheol.* See Notes on Isa. xiv. 9, where the word is fully explained. The word here refers to the under-world—the abodes of the dead; and, in the apprehension of the psalmist, corresponds in depth with the word "heaven" in height. The two represent all worlds, above and below; and the idea is, that in neither direction, above or below, could he go where God would not be. ¶ *Thou* art there. Or, more emphatically and impressively in the original, "*Thou!*" That is, the psalmist imagines himself in the highest heaven, or in the deepest abodes of the dead,—and lo! God is there also! he has not gone from *him!* he is still in the presence of the same God!

9. If *I take the wings of the morning.* Literally, "I will take the wings of the morning." That is, I will take this as a supposable case; I will imagine what would occur, should I be able to take to myself the wings

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness [1] hideth not from thee; [y] but the night

[1] *darkeneth.* [y] Dan. ii. 22.

of the morning, and endeavour to escape *by flight* from the presence of God, or go where he could not pursue me, or where he would not be. The "wings of the morning" evidently mean that by which the light of the morning *seems to fly* — the most rapid object known to us. It is not to be supposed that the psalmist had an idea of the exact velocity of light, but to him that was the most rapid object known; and his language is not the *less* striking because the laws of its flight have become accurately known. The word rendered *morning* refers to the dawn —the daybreak—the Aurora—the *first* beams of the morning light. The beams of light are in fact no swifter then than at any other time of the day, but they *seem* to be swifter, as they so quickly penetrate the darkness. ¶ And *dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.* The end of the sea; that is, the *west*, as the sea referred to undoubtedly is the Mediterranean, which was *west* of Palestine, and which became another name for the west. The idea is, that if he could fly with the rapidity of light, and could be in an instant over the sea, even beyond its remotest border, still God would be there before him. He could not escape from the Divine presence.

10. *Even there shall thy hand lead me.* I shall find thee there; thy hand would be upon me; I should not have gone from thy presence. ¶ *And thy right hand shall hold me.* Still hold me; still be laid upon me. I should find myself there, as certainly as here, in thy hand;—and in the same sense,—either to seize upon me if I went astray, or to protect me, if obedient, supported by thee in all the perils of the flight. God, still the same—the same in all respects—would be with me there as he is here.

11. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me.* If I seek to find refuge in the darkness of the night so that God would not see me. The word rendered *cover*—שׁוּף, *shuph*—means properly to snap, to gape after; then, to lie in wait for; and then, to attack, or fall upon any one, unexpectedly. It is rendered *bruise* (twice) in Gen. iii. 15, "He shall *bruise* thy head, and thou shalt *bruise* his heel;" *breaketh* in Job ix. 17, "He *breaketh* me with a tempest;" and in this place *cover*. It does not occur elsewhere. Here it means to fall upon; to overpower; to cover. The idea is, If it should come suddenly upon me; if I should be involved in sudden darkness—*as if* the darkness should come and attempt to *snatch* me away from God. All this would be in vain, for it would be, so far as God is concerned, bright day around me. ¶ *Even the night shall be light about me.* In respect to me. It shall be as if I stood in the full blaze of light. God can see me still; he can mark my goings; he can perceive all that I do as plainly then as at mid-day. This *is* so:—and what a thought this is for a wicked man who seeks to escape detection in his crimes by perpetrating them in the night! What a thought for a good man, that in the darkest night of sorrow, when there seems to be nothing but deep midnight, when there appears to be not a ray of light in his dwelling, or on his path, that all to the eye of God is as clear as noon-day! For in that night of sorrow God sees him as plainly as in the brightest days of prosperity and joy.

12. *Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee.* Marg., as in Heb., *darken-*

shineth as the day: [1] the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee.*

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee: for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works, and

[1] *as* is *the darkness, so* is *the light.*

eth not. Darkness does not make darkness to thee. It makes things dark to us; not to him. So it is in natural darkness; so in moral darkness. It seems dark to us; it is not so to him. Things appear dark to us, — disappointment, bereavement, trouble, care, losses; but all is light to God. The existence of sin and suffering on the earth seems dark to us;—not to him, for he sees the reasons and the end of all. ¶ *But the night shineth as the day.* One is as bright and clear to him as the other. ¶ *The darkness and the light* are *both alike* to thee. Marg., as in Heb., *As is the darkness so is the light.* To thee there is no difference. All is light.

13. *For thou hast possessed my reins.* The word here rendered *possessed* means properly to *set upright,* to *erect,* and hence the derivative of the verb is applied to a cane or reed, as being erect. Then the word means to found, to create, Gen. xiv. 19, 22, —as the heavens and the earth; and then, to get, to gain, to purchase, etc. Here the word seems to be used in its original sense, to make, create, etc. The idea is, not as in our translation, that God *possessed* or *owned* them, but that he had *made* them, and that, *therefore,* he knew all about them. The word *reins* means literally the *kidneys;* and then, it comes to denote the inward part, the mind, the soul, the seat of the desires, affections, and passions. Jer. xi. 20. See Notes on Ps. vii. 9; Job xix. 27. The meaning here is, that God had made him; that the innermost recesses of his being had been constituted as they are by God; and that, *therefore,* he must be able to see all that there is in the very depths of the soul, however it may be hidden from the eye of man. ¶ *Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.* The word here rendered *cover* means properly to interweave; to weave; to knit together, and the literal translation would be, "Thou hast *woven* me in my mother's womb, meaning that God had put his parts together, as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket. So it is rendered by De Wette and by Gesenius (*Lex.*). The original word has, however, also the idea of protecting, as in a booth or hut, woven or knit together, — to wit, of boughs and branches. The former signification best suits the connexion; and then the sense would be, that as God had made him,—as he had formed his members, and united them in a bodily frame and form before he was born,— he must be able to understand all his thoughts and feelings. As he was not concealed from God before he saw the light, so he could not be anywhere.

14. *I will praise thee.* I will not merely admire what is so great and marvellous, but I will acknowledge thee in a public manner as wise, and holy, and good: — as entitled to honour, love, and gratitude. ¶ *For I am fearfully* and *wonderfully made.* The word rendered "fearfully" means properly *fearful things;* things fitted to produce fear or reverence. The word rendered "wonderfully made" means properly to distinguish; to separate. The literal translation of this—as near as can be given—would be, "I am distinguished by fearful things;" that is, by things in my creation which are fitted to inspire awe. I am distinguished among thy works by things which tend to exalt my ideas of God, and to fill my soul with reverent and devout feelings. The idea is, that he was *distinguished*

that my soul knoweth [1] right well.

15 My [2] substance was not hid from thee, when [z] I was made in

[1] *greatly.* [2] Or, *strength*, or, *body.*

secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and

[z] Job x. 8, 9.

among the works of creation, or so "separated" from other things in his endowments as to work in the mind a sense of awe. He was made different from inanimate objects, and from the brute creation; he was *so* made, in the entire structure of his frame, as to fill the mind with wonder. The more any one contemplates his own bodily formation, and becomes acquainted with the anatomy of the human frame, and the more he understands of his mental organization, the more he will see the force and propriety of the language used by the psalmist. ¶ *Marvellous* are *thy works.* Fitted are they to excite wonder and admiration. The particular reference here is to his own formation; but the same remark may be made of the works of God in general. ¶ *And* that *my soul knoweth right well.* Marg., as in Heb., *greatly.* I am fully convinced of it. I am deeply impressed by it. We can see clearly that the works of God are "wonderful," even if we can understand nothing else about them.

15. *My substance was not hid from thee.* Thou didst see it; thou didst understand it altogether, when it was hidden from the eyes of man. The word *substance* is rendered in the margin, *strength* or *body.* The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and Luther render it, "my bone," or "my bones." The word properly means strength, and then anything strong. Another form of the word, with different pointing in the Hebrew, means a bone, so called from its strength. The allusion here is to the bodily frame, considered as strong, or as that which has strength. Whatever there was that entered into and constituted the vigour of his frame, the psalmist says, was seen and known by God, even in its commencement, and when most feeble. Its capability to become strong,—feeble as it then was,—could not even at that time be concealed or hidden from the view of God. ¶ *When I was made in secret.* In the womb; or, hidden from the eye of man. Even then thine eye saw me, and saw the wondrous process by which my members were formed. ¶ And *curiously wrought.* Literally, *embroidered.* The Hebrew word—רָקַם, *rakam*—means to deck with colour, to variegate. Hence it means to variegate a garment; to weave with threads of various colours. With us the idea of *embroidering* is that of working various colours *on* a cloth by a needle. The Hebrew word, however, properly refers to the act of *weaving in* various threads — as now in weaving carpets. The reference here is to the various and complicated tissues of the human frame — the tendons, nerves, veins, arteries, muscles, *as if* they had been woven, or as they appear to be curiously interweaved. No work of tapestry can be compared with this; no art of man could *weave* together such a variety of most tender and delicate fibres and tissues as those which go to make up the human frame, even if they were made ready to his hand:—and who but God could *make* them? The comparison is a most beautiful one; and it will be admired the more, the more man understands the structure of his own frame. ¶ *In the lowest parts of the earth.* Wrought in a place as dark, as obscure, and as much beyond the power of human observation as though it had been done low down beneath the ground where no eye of man can penetrate. Comp. Notes on Job xxviii. 7, 8.

16. *Thine eyes did see my substance,*

in thy book [1] all *my members* were written, [2] *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

[1] *all of them.*

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great [a] is the sum of them!

[2] Or, what *days they should be fashioned.*
[a] Ps. xl. 5.

yet being unperfect. This whole verse is very obscure, but the *idea* in this expression clearly is, "Before I had shape or form thou didst see what I was to be." The single word in the original translated "my substance, yet being unperfect," is גֹּלֶם, *golem.* It occurs only in this place, though the verb—גָּלַם, *galam*—is found in 2 Kings ii. 8, where it is used in reference to the mantle of Elijah: "And Elijah took his mantle, and *wrapped it together,* etc. That is, he rolled it up, or he folded it. The noun, then, means that which *is* rolled or wrapped together; that which is folded up, and, hence is applicable to anything folded up or undeveloped; and would thus most aptly denote the embryo, or the fœtus, where all the members of the body are as yet folded up, or undeveloped; that is, before they have assumed their distinct form and proportions. This is undoubtedly the idea here. Before the embryo had any such form that its future size, shape, or proportions could be marked by the eye of man, it was clearly and distinctly known by God. ¶ *And in thy book.* Where thou recordest all things. Perhaps the allusion here would be to the book of an architect or draftsman, who, before his work is begun, draws his plan, or sketches it for the direction of the workmen. ¶ *All* my members *were written.* The words *my members* are not in the original. The Hebrew is, as in the margin, *all of them.* The reference may be, not to the members of his body, but to his *days* (see the margin on the succeeding phrase),—and then the sense would be, "all my *days,* or all the periods of my life, were delineated in thy book. That is, When my substance—my form—was not yet developed, when yet an embryo, and when nothing could be determined from that by the eye of man as to what I was to be, all the future was known to God, and was written down,—just what should be my form and vigour; how long I should live; what I should be; what would be the events of my life. ¶ Which *in continuance were fashioned.* Marg., *What days they should be fashioned.* Literally, "Days should be formed." De Wette renders this, "The days were determined before any one of them was." There is nothing in the Hebrew to correspond with the phrase "in continuance." The simple idea is, The days of my life were determined on, the whole matter was fixed and settled, not by anything seen *in* the embryo, but *before* there was any form—before there were any means of judging from what I then was to what I would be—all was seen and arranged in the Divine mind. ¶ *When* as yet there was *none of them.* Literally, "And not one among them." Before there was one of them in actual existence. Not one development had yet occurred from which it could be inferred what the rest would be. The entire knowledge on the subject must have been based on Omniscience.

17. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* On the word *thoughts,* see Notes on ver. 2. Comp. ver. 23. The remark is made here doubtless in view of the numberless *thoughts* involved in planning and forming a frame so wondrous, and in the care necessary to bring it to perfection; to develop it; to provide for it; to guard and defend it. How many *thoughts* of a parent are employed in behalf of his children, in providing for them; teaching them; counselling them; anticipating their wants. How many more

18 *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.

20 For they speak against thee

thoughts are needful on the part of God in reference to each one of us: — for there are numberless things necessary for us which cannot occupy the mind of a parent, since he cannot accomplish these things for us; they do not lie within his province, or in his power. ¶ *How great is the sum of them.* Literally, "How strong are the heads of them." That is, The heading of them, or the summing of them up, would be a task beyond the power of man. And who *could* estimate the number of the *thoughts* necessarily bestowed on himself by his Maker in all the care exercised over him; all the arrangements for his development and growth; all that is done to defend him from danger; all that is indispensable in providing for his wants; all that was necessary to secure the salvation of his soul! See Notes on Ps. xl. 5.

18. If *I should count them.* If I could count them. ¶ *They are more in number than the sand.* Numberless as the sand on the sea-shore. ¶ *When I awake, I am still with thee.* When I am lost in deep and profound meditation on this subject, and am aroused again to consciousness, I find the same thing still true. The fact of *my* being forgetful, or lost in profound meditation, has made no difference with thee. Thou art still the same; and the same unceasing care, the same thoughtfulness, still exists in regard to me. Or, the meaning may be, sleeping or waking with me, it is still the same in regard to thee. Thine eyes never close. When mine are closed in sleep, thou art round about me; when I awake from that unconscious state, I find the same thing existing still. I have been lost in forgetfulness of thee in my slumbers; but thou hast not forgotten me. There has been no change — no slumbering — with thee.

19. *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.* Comp. Notes on Isa. xi. 4. The literal translation of this would be, "If thou wilt slay the wicked." It is not easy to account for the sudden and remarkable transition or diversion of the train of thought from the main subject of the psalm, in these verses (19–22), in which the psalmist gives vent to his feelings towards the wicked, and prays that they may depart from him. Perhaps the explanation of it may be, that as the psalmist was reflecting on the fact that God is everywhere present, that he searches the hearts of men, that he must know all their conduct, he was suddenly struck with the idea of the condition of wicked men in the presence, and under the eye, of such a Being. As God knows all things, he must know them; and this instantaneously suggested the idea of their guilt and danger. Men of such characters could not deceive such a God. They could not but be known to him, and could not but be objects of his aversion. They could not, therefore, but be in danger. ¶ *Depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men.* See Ps. cxix. 115. The Hebrew is, "Men of bloods;" that is, men who shed blood. The language is used to denote wicked men in general. The idea here is not that the psalmist was in danger from them at that time, but that he desired to be separate from that class of men; he did not wish to be ranked with them, to partake of their conduct, or to share in their fate. He had no sympathy with them, and he desired to be separate from them altogether.

20. *For they speak against thee wickedly.* This is one form or manifestation of their character as wicked men, that they speak maliciously

wickedly, *and* thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

21 Do [b] not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and

[b] 2 Chron. xix. 2.

against God. The psalmist, therefore, desired to have nothing to do with them. It is always a sufficient reason for avoiding the society, the friendship, and the fellowship of others, when they profane, blaspheme, or calumniate the name of God. From such men we should at once withdraw. Piety shrinks from the society of such men, whatever may be their rank, or their social qualities, and turns away in pain, in sorrow, in abhorrence. See Notes on Ps. xxvi. 9. ¶ And *thine enemies take* thy name *in vain.* It is proof that they are thine enemies that they take thy name in vain, or that they are profane men; it is a sufficient reason for desiring to be separated from them.

21. *Do not I hate them, O* LORD, *that hate thee?* This is in the consciousness of the psalmist a proof of his own real piety, as derived from his feelings towards those who were the enemies of God. The word *hate* here, as applied to them, must be understood in the sense that he disapproved of their conduct; that he did not desire to be associated with them; that he wished to avoid their society, and to find his friends among men of a different character. See Notes on Ps. i. 1. Comp. Ps. v. 5. ¶ *And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?* The expression here—"grieved"—explains the meaning of the word "hate" in the former member of the verse. It is not that hatred which is followed by malignity or ill-will; it is that which is accompanied with grief—pain of heart—pity—sorrow. So the Saviour looked on men: Mark iii. 5: "And when he had looked round about on them with *anger,* being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts." The Hebrew word used here, however, contains *also* the idea of being disgusted with; of loathing; of nauseating. See Notes on Ps. cxix. 158. The feeling referred to is anger,—conscious disgust—at such conduct; and grief, pain, sorrow, that men should evince such feelings towards their Maker.

22. *I hate them with perfect hatred.* With no approval whatever of their conduct; with no sympathy for the evil they do; with no words of apology for their sinful acts; with entire disapprobation. ¶ *I count them mine enemies.* As they are the enemies of God, so I regard them as *my* enemies. I do not wish to be associated with them, or to be regarded as one of them.

23. *Search me, O God.* The word *search* here is the same as in ver. 1. See Notes on that verse. The psalmist had stated the fact that it is a characteristic of God that he *does* search the heart; and he here prays that God *would* exercise that power in relation to himself; that as God could know all that there is within the heart, he would examine him with the closest scrutiny, so that he might be under no delusion or self-deception; that he might not indulge in any false hopes; that he might not cherish any improper feelings or desires. The prayer denotes great *sincerity* on the part of the psalmist. It indicates also self-distrust. It is an expression of what all must feel who have any just views of themselves,—that the heart is very corrupt; that we are liable to deceive ourselves; and that the most thorough search *should* be made that we be *not* deceived and lost. ¶ *And know my heart.* Know or see all that is within it. ¶ *Try me.* As metal is

know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts;

24 And see if *there be any* [1] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

[1] *way of pain*, or, *grief*.

tried or proved that is put to a *test* to learn what it is. The trial here is that which would result from the Divine inspection of his heart. ¶ *And know my thoughts.* See what they are. The word rendered *thoughts* occurs only in one other place, Ps. xciv. 19. The idea is, Search me thoroughly; examine not merely my outward conduct, but what I think about; what are my purposes; what passes through my mind; what occupies my imagination and my memory; what secures my affections and controls my will. He must be a very sincere man who prays that God will search his thoughts, for there are few who would be willing that their fellow-men, even their best friends, should know all that they are thinking about.

24. *And see if* there be any *wicked way in me.* Marg., *way of pain*, or *grief*. The Hebrew word properly means an image, an idol (Isa. xlviii. 5), but it also means pain, 1 Chron. iv. 9; Isa. xiv. 3. The word in the form used here does not occur elsewhere. Gesenius (*Lex.*) renders it here idol-worship. De Wette, "way of idols." Prof. Alexander, "way of pain." The Septuagint and Vulgate, "way of iniquity." So Luther. The Syriac, "way of falsehood." Rosenmüller, "way of an idol." According to this, the prayer is that God would search him and see if there was anything in him that partook of the nature of idolatry, or of defection from the true religion; any tendency to go back from God, to worship other gods, to leave the worship of the true God. As idolatry comprehends the sum of all that is evil, as being alienation from the true God, the prayer is that there might be nothing found in his heart which tended to alienate him from God, —would indicate unfaithfulness or want of attachment to him. ¶ *And lead me in the way everlasting.* The way which leads to eternal life; the path which I may tread for ever. In any other way than in the service of God his steps must be arrested. He must encounter his Maker in judgment, and be cut off, and consigned to woe. The path to heaven is one which man may steadily pursue; one, in reference to which death itself is really no interruption,—for the journey commenced here will be continued through the dark valley, and continued for evermore. Death does not interrupt the journey of the righteous for a moment. It is the same journey continued, —as when we cross a narrow stream, and are on the same path still.

PSALM CXL.

To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

DELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the [2] violent man;

[2] *man of violences.*

This, also, is a psalm of David. The occasion on which it was composed is not indicated in the title, but the contents of the psalm leave no room to doubt that it was written at an early period of his life, in the time when he was subjected to persecution—most probably in the time of Saul. The psalm bears every mark of David's style and spirit; and there can be no doubt that he was the author of it. For the reasons why it may have had a place *here* in the Book of Psalms, see Introd. to Ps. cxxxviii. On the phrase, "To the chief Musician," see Introd. to Ps. iv.

1. *Deliver me, O* LORD, *from the evil man.* That is, evidently from some particular man who was endeavouring to injure him; some personal enemy. All the circumstances mentioned agree well with the supposition that Saul is intended. ¶ *Preserve me from the violent man.* Marg.,

2 Which imagine mischiefs in *thcir* heart: continually are they gathered together *for* war.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent: adders' [c] poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.

5 The proud have hid a snare [d] for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside: they have set gins for me. Selah.

c Rom. iii. 13.

d Jer. xviii. 22.

as in Heb., *man of violences.* That is, one who has committed violence so often, who has so frequently done wrong, that this may be considered a characteristic of the man. This would apply well to the repeated acts of Saul in persecuting David, and endeavouring to do him injury.

2. *Which imagine mischiefs in* their *heart.* Here the language is changed to the plural number in the Hebrew, implying that while there was one man who was eminent in his wickedness and his wrong-doing, there were many others associated with him, acting under his direction. The word *mischiefs* in the Hebrew means *evils; wickednesses.* It was not a single purpose; the plan embraced many forms of evil,—doing him wrong in every way possible. ¶ *Continually are they gathered together* for *war.* They are organized for this purpose; they are constantly prepared for it. The word rendered *gathered together* properly means to sojourn, to dwell for a time; and it has been proposed by some to render this, "All the day they dwell with wars;" that is, they are constantly involved in them. But the word may mean also *to gather together,* as in Ps. lvi. 6.

3. *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.* Comp. Notes on Ps. lxiv. 3. The idea here is, that since the tongue of the serpent *seems* to be sharp, pointed, adapted to penetrate (and probably the original reference in the image was derived from that idea), the wound inflicted is by the serpent's tongue—*as if* with a hard, penetrating point. It is now known, however, that it is by a tooth —a single tooth, made flexible for the purpose, — at the root of which a small bag containing the poison is located, which is injected through an orifice in the tooth into the wound. The meaning here is, that the words spoken by such persons — by their tongues — were like the poison produced by the bite of a serpent. ¶ *Adders' poison* is *under their lips.* The asp or adder is among the most poisonous of serpents. Thus Cleopatra of Egypt is said to have destroyed her own life by an asp, which she had concealed for that purpose. This passage is quoted in Rom. iii. 13, as a proof of human depravity. See Notes on that verse.

4. *Keep me, O* LORD, *from the hands of the wicked,* etc. See Notes on Ps. lxxi. 4. This is a repetition of the prayer in ver. 1. ¶ *Who have purposed to overthrow my goings.* To thrust me down as I go; to defeat my plans; to destroy me. They endeavour to prevent my accomplishing what I had designed to do.

5. *The proud have hid a snare for me.* Haughty; arrogant; oppressive men. See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 7; lvii. 6. ¶ *And cords.* Strings; twine; —as those do who lay a net to catch birds, and who design to spring it upon them unawares. ¶ *They have spread a net by the wayside.* Where I may be expected to walk, and where it may be suddenly sprung upon me. ¶ *They have set gins for me.* Snares, toils—such as are set for wild beasts. The meaning is, that they had not only made open war upon him, but they had sought to bring him into an ambush—to rush upon him suddenly when he was not on his guard, and did not know that danger was near.

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device, [1] *lest* they exalt themselves. Selah.

9 *As for* the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

[1] Or, *let them* not *be exalted.*

6. *I said unto the* LORD, *Thou* art *my God,* etc. In all these dangers from open war, in all these perils from a crafty enemy lying in ambush, my only refuge was God; my hope was in him alone. From all these dangers, seen and unseen, I knew that he could defend me, and I confidently believed that he would.

7. *O* GOD *the Lord,* etc. Literally, "Jehovah, Lord, the strength of my salvation." The word rendered "God," in the original, is *Jehovah.* The address is to Jehovah as the Lord; that is, as the supreme Ruler, —who presides over all things. Him the psalmist acknowledged as *his* Lord and Ruler. The phrase "the strength of my salvation" means the strength or power on which my safety depends. I have no other hope of deliverance but in thee. ¶ *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.* Thou hast been a shield unto me. Literally, "In the day of arms," or of armour, 1 Kings x. 25; Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.

8. *Grant not, O* LORD, *the desires of the wicked.* That is, in the matter under consideration. Let them not accomplish their desire in my destruction. Let them not succeed in their designs against me. The prayer, however, *may* be used more generally. It is proper to pray that the desires of the wicked, as wicked men, may not be granted to them; that they may *not* be successful in their purposes. Success in such desires would be only an injury to themselves and to the world. It is proper to pray that the purposes of the wicked may be defeated, and that they may be led to abandon their designs and to seek better ends. For this, in fact, we always pray when we pray for their conversion. ¶ *Further not his wicked device.* His purpose against me. ¶ Lest *they exalt themselves.* Lest they attribute it to their own skill, wisdom, or valour, and lest they pride themselves on their success. To succeed in a righteous cause makes a man humble and grateful; in a bad cause, proud, and forgetful of God. The margin here is, "*Let them not be exalted.*" The meaning is, that success would at the same time elate them in their own estimation, and increase their bad influence in the world. It is, on every account, a benevolent prayer that wicked men may *not* be successful in their plans of iniquity.

9. As for *the head of those that compass me about.* Luther renders this, "The calamity which my enemies design against me must fall upon their own heads." The passage stands in contrast with ver. 7: "Thou hast covered my head," etc. As for his own head, it had been protected in the day of battle. In reference now to the heads of his enemies,—of those that compassed him about,—he prays that what they had designed for *his* head might come by a just retribution on their own. The phrase "compass me about" refers to his enemies as being numerous, and as surrounding him on every side. See Ps. xl. 12; lxxxviii. 17; cix. 3; cxviii. 10–12. ¶ *Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* Come upon them. The mischief which they have designed against me; that which they have conspired to bring on me. The reference is to a combination against him, or to some agreement which they had made to destroy him.

10 Let [e] burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.

11 Let not [1] an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.

12 I [f] know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, *and* the right of the poor.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

[e] Ps. xi. 6.

[1] *a man of tongue*, or, *an evil speaker, a wicked man of violence, be established in the earth: let him be hunted to* his *overthrow.*

[f] 1 Sam. ii. 8.

10. *Let burning coals fall upon them.* Let them be punished, *as if* burning coals were poured upon them. See Notes on Ps. xi. 6; xviii. 12, 13; cxx. 4. ¶ *Let them be cast into the fire.* Punished as if they were cast into the fire and consumed. ¶ *Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.* That they may utterly perish. This was one mode of punishing, by casting a man into a deep pit from which he could not escape, and leaving him to die, Gen. xxxvii. 20, 24; Ps. ix. 15; xxxv. 7; Jer. xli. 7.

11. *Let not an evil speaker.* Literally, "A man of tongue." That is, a man whom the tongue rules; a man of an unbridled tongue; a man who does not control his tongue. See Notes on James iii. 2–12. ¶ *Be established in the earth.* Be successful or prosperous; let him not carry out his designs. It is not desirable that a man *should* prosper in such purposes; and therefore, this is not a prayer of malignity, but of benevolence. ¶ *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, etc. More literally, "A man of violence — a bad man — they shall hunt him down speedily;" or, "let him be hunted down speedily. Let him who forms a project of violence and wrong—a bad man—be hunted as the beasts of prey are, and let his destruction come quickly." Marg., *Let him be hunted to his overthrow.* But the explanation now given suits the connexion, and is a literal expression of the sense of the original.

12. *I know that the* LORD *will maintain the cause of the afflicted.* See Notes on Ps. ix. 4. The psalmist here doubtless refers primarily to himself, as having a confident belief that the Lord would maintain *his* cause, or would defend *him.* At the same time he makes the statement general, implying that what would be done to him would be done to all in similar circumstances. The idea is that God, in all his attributes, in all his providential arrangements, in all his interpositions on earth, would be found to be on the side of the oppressed, the afflicted, and the wronged. He has no attribute that can take part with an oppressor or a wrong doer. The wicked cannot come to him with the belief that he will be on their side:—the righteous—the oppressed—the afflicted—can. ¶ And *the right of the poor.* He will defend the right of the poor. Literally, *The judgment of the poor.* That which will be just and right in their case.

13. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name.* Unto thee. (1) They will have occasion to do it; (2) they will be disposed to do it. They will not be unmindful of the favours conferred upon them; it will be a characteristic of them that they *will be* thankful. ¶ *The upright shall dwell in thy presence.* They shall be under thy protection; they shall be admitted to thy favour; they shall dwell in thy dwelling-place. (1) On earth they shall enjoy his favour,—*as if* they abode with God. (2) In heaven they will be permitted to dwell with him for ever. The general idea of the psalm is, that the poor, the persecuted, the afflicted, if righteous, shall enjoy the favour and protection of God. God is on their

side, and not on the side of the wicked who oppress them. But then, men *should be righteous* in order that they may find the favour of God and dwell with him. There is no reason why a *poor* wicked man should enjoy the favour of God any more than why a *rich* wicked man should. It is not poverty or riches that commend us to God; it is faith, and holiness, and love, and obedience, in the condition of life in which we are placed, be it in a cottage or a palace.

PSALM CXLI.

This, also, is a psalm of David, and apparently composed under circumstances similar to the former. It is impossible, however, to determine the precise time at which it was written, or the exact circumstances of the psalmist at the time.

The circumstances, as far as they can be gathered from the psalm, are these:—

(1) He was in a situation of peril;—so much so as to have almost no hope for himself or his followers. Snares and gins were laid for him (ver. 9), and his followers and friends were scattered and dispirited, as if their bones were scattered at the grave's mouth, ver. 7. Everything looked dark and discouraging.

(2) In these circumstances it occurred to his mind, or was suggested to him, to say or do something which, not honourable or right in itself, might have brought relief, or which might have rescued him from his peril, and secured the favour of his enemies;—some trick—some artful scheme—some concession of principle—which would have delivered him from his danger, and which would have secured for him a position of safety, plenty, and honour, vers. 3, 4. Many considerations, derived from his danger, might have been suggested for this, even by those who were not bad men, but who might have been timid men, and who might have felt that their cause was hopeless, and that it would be proper to avail themselves of this opportunity to escape from their peril in any way.

(3) David knew that to resist this,—to abstain from following this apparently wise and prudent counsel,—to refuse to do what the circumstances might seem to others to justify,—would expose him to the rebukes of sincere and honest men who thought that this would be right. Yet knowing all this, he resolved to bear their reproach rather than to follow such advice by doing a wrong thing. He says (ver. 5), that though they should smite him, it would (he knew) be in kindness, with the best intention; though they should reprove him, it would be like a "gentle oil"—it would not break his head or crush him. He would cherish no resentment; he would still pray for them as usual in the time of their calamities, ver. 5. Even when the "judges," the rulers,—his enemies—should be overthrown, as they might be, he would take no advantage of that circumstance; he would not seek for revenge; his words should be "sweet" kind words still, ver. 6.

(4) David prays, therefore, in view of this temptation, and of the counsel suggested to him, that he might be able to set a watchful guard over his own lips, and to keep his heart, that he might not be betrayed into anything which would be dishonourable or wicked; that he might not be allured to that which was wrong by any prospect of temporal advantage which might follow. vers. 1–4.

(5) As the result of all, he put his trust in God, that he might be enabled to pursue an upright course; and that, in such a course, he might be preserved from the snares which had been laid for him, vers. 8–10.

Perhaps what is here said in illustration of the design of the psalm will best agree with the supposition that it refers to the time mentioned in 1 Sam. xxiv. 1–7. Saul was then in his power. He could easily have put him to death. His friends advised it. The *suggestion* was a natural one; it would seem to many to be a justifiable measure. But he resisted the temptation, trusting in the Lord to deliver him, without his resorting to a measure which could not but have been regretted ever afterwards.

The practical truth which would be illustrated by this view of the psalm would be, *that we are not to say or do anything that is wrong, though good men, our friends, advise it; though it should subject us to their reproaches if we do it not; though to do it would be followed by great personal advantages; and though not to do it would leave us still in danger—a danger from which the course advised would have delivered*

PSALM CXLI.

A Psalm of David.

LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be [1] set forth before thee *as* incense, [g] *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.

4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practise wicked

[1] *directed.*

[g] Rev. v. 8.

us. It is better to act nobly, honourably, and in a high-minded manner, and to leave the result with God, still trusting in him.

1. LORD, *I cry unto thee.* In view of my perils; in view of the suggestions of my friends; in view of my temptation to do a wrong thing at their advice, and with the prospect of the advantage which it might seem to be to me. ¶ *Make haste unto me.* To save me from all this danger:—the danger from my enemies; the danger from the counsels of my friends. See Notes on Ps. xxii. 19; comp. Ps. xl. 13; lxx. 1, 5; lxxi. 12. The meaning is, that there is need of *immediate* interposition. There is danger that I shall be overcome; that I may be tempted to do a wrong thing; that I may be ruined if there is any delay. ¶ *Give ear unto my voice,* etc. See Notes on Ps. v. 1.

2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee.* Marg., *directed.* The Hebrew word means to fit; to establish; to make firm. The psalmist desires that his prayer should not be like that which is feeble, languishing, easily dissipated, but that it should be like that which is firm and secure. ¶ As *incense.* See the Notes and illustrations on Luke i. 9, 10. Let my prayer come before thee in such a manner as incense does when it is offered in worship; in a manner of which the ascending of incense is a suitable emblem. See Notes on Rev. v. 8; viii. 3. ¶ And *the lifting up of my hands.* In prayer;—a natural posture in that act of worship. ¶ As *the evening sacrifice.* The sacrifice offered on the altar at evening. Let my prayer be as acceptable as that is when it is offered in a proper manner.

3. *Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth.* That I may not say anything rashly, unadvisedly, improperly. Comp. Ps. xxxix. 1. The prayer here is, that God would guard him from the temptation to say something wrong. To this he seems to have been prompted by the circumstances of the case, and by the advice of those who were with him. See introduction to the psalm. Comp. Notes on Ps. xi. 1. ¶ *Keep the door of my lips.* That my lips or mouth may not open except when it is proper and right; when something good and true is to be said. Nothing can be more proper than *this* prayer; nothing more desirable than that God should keep us from saying what we ought not to say.

4. *Incline not my heart to* any *evil thing.* Heb., to a word that is evil;" that is, wrong. The connexion seems to demand that the term should be thus explained. The expression "Incline not" is not designed to mean that God exerts any *positive* influence in leading the heart to that which is wrong; but it may mean "Do not place me in circumstances where I may be tempted; do not leave me to myself; do not allow any improper influence to come over me by which I shall be led astray." The expression is similar to that in the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." The psalmist's allusion here has been explained in the introduction to the psalm. ¶ *To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity.* To be united or associated with men who do wrong; to do the things which wicked and unprincipled men do. Let me not be permitted to do anything that will be regarded as identifying me with

works with men that work iniquity: and [h] let me not eat of their dainties.

[h] Prov. xxiii. 6.

5 Let the righteous smite me: [1] *it shall be* a kindness: and let

[1] Or, *kindly, and reprove me; let not* their *precious oil break my head.*

them. Let me not, in the circumstances in which I am placed, be left to act so that the fair interpretation of my conduct shall be that I am one of their number, or act on the same principles on which they act. Literally, "To practise practices in wickedness with men." ¶*And let me not eat of their dainties.* Let me not be tempted by any prospect of participating in their mode of living—in the luxuries and comforts which they enjoy—to do a wicked or wrong thing. Let not a prospect or desire of this overcome my better judgment, or the dictates of my conscience, or my settled principles of what is right. Men often *do* this. Good men are often tempted to do it. The prospect or the hope of being enabled to enjoy what the rich enjoy, to live in luxury and ease, to be "clothed in fine linen and fare sumptuously every day," to move in circles of splendour and fashion, often leads them to a course of action which their consciences condemn; to practices inconsistent with a life of godliness; to sinful indulgences which utterly ruin their character. Satan has few temptations for man more attractive and powerful than the "dainties" which wealth can give; and there are few of his devices more effectual in ruining men than those which are derived from these allurements. The word here rendered *dainties* properly refers to things which are pleasant, lovely, attractive; which give delight or pleasure. It may embrace *all* that the world has to offer as fitted to give pleasure or enjoyment. It refers here to what those in more elevated life have to offer; what they themselves live for.

5. *Let the righteous smite me.* This verse is exceedingly difficult and obscure (comp. the margin); and there have been almost as many different opinions in regard to its meaning as there have been commentators on the psalm. A large number of these opinions may be seen in Rosenmüller *in loc.* De Wette explains it, "I gladly suffer anything that is unpleasant from my friends, that may be for my good; but the wickedness of my enemies I cannot endure." The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "Let a righteous man correct me with mercy, and he will work convictions in me; but let not the oil of a sinner (for this shall still be my prayer) anoint my head at their pleasure." *Thompson's translation.* According to this, the sense would be, "If the righteous smite me with severity of words I shall take it as an act of kindness and benevolence; on the other hand, the bland words of a sinner, smooth as oil, which wound more than sharp arrows, may God avert from me." Or, in other words, "I had rather be slain by the severe words of the righteous than anointed by the oily and impious words of the wicked." The sense proposed by Hengstenberg (Com. *in loc.*) is, "Even as I through the cloud of wrath can see the sunshine of Divine goodness, I will not give myself over to doubt and despair, according to the course of the world, when the hand of the Almighty rests upon me; but I will, and can, and should, in the midst of trouble, be joyful, and that is the high privilege of which I will never be deprived." According to this, the idea is, that the sufferings endured by good men, even at the hand of the wicked, are chastisements inflicted by a gracious God in justice and mercy, and as such may be likened to a festive ointment, which the head of the sufferer should not refuse, as he will still have occasion for consolation to invoke God in the midst of trials yet to be experienced. The word *righteous* is evidently employed in the usual sense of the

him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, *which* shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.

term. It refers to those who love and serve God. The word translated *smite* — הַלָּם *halam* — is rendered *broken* in Judges v. 22; Isa. xvi. 8; xxviii. 1 (*margin*, but rendered by our translators *overcome*, sc. with wine); *smote*, Judges v. 26; Isa. xli. 7; *beaten*, Prov. xxiii. 35; *beating down*, 1 Sam. xiv. 16; *break down*, Ps. lxxiv. 6. It does not elsewhere occur, except in the verse before us. It would apply to any beating or smiting, with the fist, with a hammer, with a weapon of war, and then with *words*—words of reproof, or expressions of disapprobation. According to the view above taken (Introd.), it is used here with reference to an apprehended rebuke on the part of good men, for not following their advice. ¶ It shall be *a kindness*. Literally, "A kindness;" that is, an act of kindness. The idea is, that it would be so intended on their part; it should be so received by him. Whatever might be the wisdom of the advice, or the propriety of yielding to it, or whatever they might say if it were not followed, yet he could regard it as on their part only well-intended. If a certain course which they had advised should be rejected, and if by refusing or declining to follow it one should incur their displeasure, yet that ought to be interpreted only as an act well-intended and meant in kindness. ¶ *And let him reprove me*. As I may anticipate that he will, if his advice is not taken. I must expect to meet this consequence. ¶ It shall be *an excellent oil*. Literally, "*Oil of the head.*" That is,—like oil which is poured on the head on festive occasions, or when one is crowned, as a priest, or a prophet, or a king. See Notes on Mark vi. 13; Luke iv. 18, 19. *Oil* thus used for the head, the face, etc., was an indispensable article for the toilet among Orientals. The idea is here that the reproof of the righteous should be received as readily as that which contributed most to comely adorning and comfort;—or that which diffused brightness, cheerfulness, joy. ¶ Which *shall not break my head*. Or rather, Which my head shall not (or, should not) refuse; which it should welcome. The word rendered *break* should not have been so translated. The Hebrew word— נָוָא, *yani* — is from נָוָא, *noo* — in Hiphil, to negative; to make naught; then to refuse, to decline, to deny. It is rendered *discourage* in Num. xxxii. 7, 9 (Marg., *break*); *disallow*, Num. xxx. 5 (*twice*), 8, 11; *make of none effect*, Ps. xxxiii. 10; *break*, in the passage before us. It does not elsewhere occur. The idea is, "If such reproof comes on me for the faithful doing of what I regard as wise and best, I ought no more to reject it than the head would refuse the oil poured on it, to make the person healthful and comely." ¶ *For yet my prayer also* shall be *in their calamities*. I will not be sullen, displeased, angry, revengeful. I will not refuse to pray for them when trials come upon them, because they have not approved of my course, because they have reproved me for not following their counsel, because they have used words that were like heavy blows. I will cherish no malice; I will not be angry; I will not seek to be revenged. I will not turn away from them when trouble comes on them. I will love them, cherish with gratitude the memory of the kindness they meant, and pray for them in the time when they specially need prayer. Should they now rebuke me rather than pray for me, yet I will not in turn rebuke *them* in similar trials, but *will pray for them*, as though nothing of this had happened. Noble spirit,—indicative of what should always be the spirit of a good man. Our friends—even our pious friends—may not be always *wise* in their advice, and they may be severe in their reproofs

6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are [i] sweet.

[i] 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

if we do not follow their counsel; yet let us receive all as well-intended, and let us not in anger, in sullenness, or in revenge, refuse to aid them, and to pray for them in trouble, though they were *not* wise, and though they used words of severity towards us.

6. *When*, etc., etc. This passage is no less difficult than the preceding, and it seems almost impossible to determine its exact meaning. What is meant by *judges?* What judges are referred to by the word *their?* What is meant by their being *overthrown?* What is the sense of the words *in stony places?* Does the passage refer to some certain prospect that they *would be* overthrown, or is it a mere supposition which relates to something that *might* occur? Who are meant by *they*, in the phrase "they shall hear my words?" It seems to me that the most plausible interpretation of the passage is founded on that which has been assumed thus far in the explanation of the psalm, as referring to the state of things recorded in 1 Sam. xxiv. 1–7. David was in the wilderness of En-gedi, in the midst of a rocky region. Saul, apprised of his being there, came with three thousand chosen men to apprehend him, and went into a cave to lie down to rest. Unknown, probably, to him, David and his men were in the "sides of the cave." They now saw that Saul was completely in their power, and that it would be an easy thing to enter the cave, and kill him when off his guard. The men urgently advised David to do this. David entered the cave, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, showing how completely Saul was in his power, but he proceeded no farther; he did not follow the suggestions of his friends; he did not take the life of Saul, as he might have done; and he even regretted what he *had* done, as implying a want of due respect for the anointed of the Lord, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Yet he had the fullest confidence that the king and his forces *would* be overthrown, and that it would be done in a way consistent with open and manly war, and not in an underhanded and stealthful way, as it would have been if he had cut him off in the cave. With this in view, it seems to me that the difficult passage before us may be explained with, at least, some degree of plausibility. ¶ *Their judges.* By the judges, are to be understood the rulers of the people; the magistrates; those in office and power,—referring to Saul and the officers of his government. "*Their* judges;" to wit, the judges or rulers of the hosts in opposition to me,—of those against whom I war; Saul and the leaders of his forces. ¶ *Are overthrown.* Are discomfited, vanquished, subdued; as I am confident they will be, in the regular prosecution of the war, and not by treachery and stealth. ¶ *In stony places.* Literally, "in the hands of the rock;" or, as the word *hands* may sometimes be used, "in the *sides* of the rock." It might mean *by the power of the rock*, as thrown upon them; or, *against its sides.* The essential idea is, that the *rocks*, the rocky places, would be among the means by which they would be overthrown; and the sense is, that now that Saul was in the cave—or was in that rocky region, better known to David than to him—Saul was so completely in his power, that David felt that the victory, in a regular course of warfare, would be his. ¶ *They shall hear my words.* The followers of Saul; the people of the land; the nation. Saul being removed—subdued—slain—the people will become obedient to me who have been anointed by a prophet as their king, and designated as the successor of Saul. David did not doubt that he would himself reign when Saul was overcome, or

7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth.

8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust, [1] leave not my soul [2] destitute.

[1] *make.* [2] *bare.*

9 Keep me from the snares [k] *which* they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal [3] escape.

[k] Prov. xiii. 14. [3] *pass over.*

that the people would hear his words, and submit to him as king. ¶ *For they are sweet.* They shall be pleasant; mild; gentle; equitable; just. After the harsh and severe enactments of Saul, after enduring his acts of tyranny, the people will be glad to welcome me, and to live under the laws of a just and equal administration. The passage, therefore, expresses confidence that Saul and his hosts would be overthrown, and that the people of the land would gladly hail the accession to the throne of one who had been anointed to reign over them.

7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.* We are, indeed, now like bones scattered in the places of graves; we seem to be weak, feeble, disorganized. We are in a condition which of itself seems to be hopeless: as hopeless as it would be for dry bones scattered when they were buried to rise up and attack an enemy. The reference is to the condition of David and his followers as pursued by a mighty foe. His hope was not in his own forces, but in the power and interposition of God (ver. 8). ¶ *As when one cutteth and cleaveth* wood *upon the earth.* Like chips, blocks, splinters, that have no strength; as when these lie scattered around—a fit emblem of our feeble and scattered forces.

8. *But mine eyes* are *unto thee, O* GOD *the Lord.* My hope is in thee. I do not rely on my own power. I do not trust in my armed forces. I know that they are weak, dispirited, scattered,—like strewed bones,—like the chips and splinters lying around the place where wood is chopped. I look, therefore, solely to God. I believe that he *will* interpose; and now that my enemy has placed himself in this position, I do not need to resort to stealthful arts—to dishonourable acts—to assassination—as my friends advise, but the object will be accomplished, and I shall be placed on the throne by the act of God, and in a manner that will not subject my name and memory to reproach by a base and treacherous deed. ¶ *In thee is my trust.* I rely on thee alone. ¶ *Leave not my soul destitute.* My life; my all. Do not now leave me without thy gracious interposition; do not suffer this juncture to pass by without such an interposition as will end the war, and restore peace to me and to a distracted land.

9. *Keep me from the snares,* etc. See Notes on Ps. xi. 6. Comp. Ps. xxxviii. 12; lxix. 22; xci. 3. The secret plans which they have laid against me. ¶ *And the gins of the workers of iniquity.* Wicked men; men who seek my destruction. On the word *gins,* see Notes on Isa. viii. 14. The gin is a trap or snare to catch birds or wild animals. The word here used is the same which occurs in Ps. xviii. 5, and which is there rendered *snare.* See Notes on that passage. Comp. also Ps. lxiv. 5; lxix. 22; cvi. 36; cxl. 5, where the same word occurs.

10. *Let the wicked fall into their own nets.* See Notes on Ps. xxxv. 8. Comp. Ps. vii. 15, 16. ¶ *Whilst that I withal escape.* Marg., as in Heb., *pass over.* While I safely pass over the net or snare which has been secretly laid for me. The word *withal* means, in the Heb., *together, at the same time;* that is, At the same time that they fall into the net, let me pass over it in safety. See Notes on Job v. 13.

PSALM CXLII.

[1] Maschil of David; a Prayer when he was in the *l* cave.

I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2 I poured out *m* my complaint before him: I showed before him my trouble.

3 When *n* my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in *o* the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

[1] Or, A Psalm *of David giving instruction.*
l 1 Sam. xxii. 1. *m* Ps. lxii. 8; cii., *title.*
n Ps. cxliii. 4. *o* Ps. cxl. 5.

PSALM CXLII.

This also is a psalm of David. It is entitled, like not a few others of the Psalms, *Maschil;* marg., *giving instruction*:—a didactic hymn. See the word explained in the Introd. to Ps. xxxii. It is said, in the title, to be "A prayer when he was in the cave;" that is, either a prayer which he composed while there, or which he composed afterwards, putting into a poetic form the substance of the prayer which he breathed forth there, or expressive of the feelings which he had when there. The reference may be either to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1), or to that in Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 3). In both cases the circumstances were substantially the same, for David had fled to the cave to escape from Saul. The prayer is such as would be appropriate to a condition of danger such as was that in which David then was. It is a cry of distress when there was no refuge—no hope—but in God; when there seemed to be no way of escape from his enemies; and when, forsaken by his friends, and pursued by an enemy who sought his life, he seemed now to be in the power of his foe. It may also be *used* to express the feelings of one now in danger,—as of a sinner under condemnation, seeing no way of escape, exposed to ruin, and shut up entirely to the mercy of God. Such a one feels, as David did on this occasion, that there can be no escape but through the interposition of God.

1. *I cried unto the* LORD *with my voice.* See Notes on Ps. iii. 4, where the language is the same. He uttered a loud and audible prayer, though he was alone. It was not a mental ejaculation, but he gave expression to his desires. ¶ *With my voice unto the* LORD *did I make my supplication.* See Ps. xxx. 8. The Hebrew word rendered "did make my supplication," means to implore favour or mercy. It denotes the language of petition and entreaty, not the language of claim.

2. *I poured out my complaint before him.* Literally, my meditation; that is, What so much occupied my thoughts at the time I expressed aloud. The word *complaint* does not express the idea. The meaning is, not that he *complained* of God or of man; but that his mind *meditated* on his condition. He was full of care and of anxiety; and he went and poured this out freely before God. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, *my prayer.* See Ps. lv. 2, where the same Hebrew word is used. ¶ *I showed before him my trouble.* I made mention of it. I spoke of it.

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me.* Luther renders this, "When my spirit was in distress." The Hebrew word rendered *overwhelmed* means, in Kal, to cover as with a garment; then, to be covered as with darkness, trouble, sorrow; and then, to languish, to faint, to be feeble: Ps. lxxvii. 3; cvii. 5. The idea here is, that, in his troubles, he had no vigour, no life, no spirit. He did not see how he could escape from his troubles, and he had no heart to make an effort. ¶ *Then thou knewest my path.* Thou didst see all. Thou didst see the way that I was treading, and all its darkness and dangers, implying here that God had made it an object to mark his course; to see what egress there might be—what way to escape from the danger. It was in no sense concealed from God, and no danger of the way was hidden from him. It is much for us to feel when

4 I [1] looked [p] on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge [2] failed me; no man [3] cared for my soul.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my [q] refuge, *and*

[1] Or, *look on the right hand and see.*
[p] Ps. lxix. 20. [2] *perished from me.*

my portion [r] in the land of the living.

6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger [s] than I.

[3] *sought after.* [q] Ps. xlvi. 1.
[r] Ps. lxxiii. 26; Lam. iii. 24.
[s] Rom. viii. 31, 37.

we are in danger or difficulty that God knows it all, and that nothing can be hidden from him. ¶ *In the way wherein I walked.* In my path; the path that I was treading. ¶ *Have they privily laid a snare for me.* They treated me as a man would treat his neighbour, who should spread a snare, or set a trap, for him in the path which he knew he must take. The word rendered "have privily laid" means to hide, to conceal. It was so concealed that I could not perceive it. They did it unknown to me. I neither knew that it was laid, nor where it was laid. They meant to spring it upon me at a moment when I was not aware, and when I should be taken by surprise. It was not open and manly warfare; it was stealth, cunning, trick, art.

4. *I looked on* my *right hand, and beheld.* Marg., *Look on the right hand and see.* The words translated *looked* and *beheld* are in the imperative mood in the Hebrew. They are not, however, improperly rendered as to the sense. They refer to David's state of mind at the time, and give vividness to the description. The psalmist seems to be in the presence of others. He calls upon them to look around; to see how he was encompassed with danger. Look, says he, in every direction; see who there is on whom I may rely; what there is to which I may trust as a refuge. I can find none; I see none; there is none. The "right hand" is referred to here as the direction where he might look for a protector: Ps. cix. 6, 31. ¶ *But* there was *no man that would know me.* No man to be seen who would recognize me as his friend; who would stand up for me; on whom I could rely. ¶ *Refuge failed me.* Marg., as in Heb., *perished from me.* If there had been any hope of refuge, it has failed altogether. There is none now. ¶ *No man cared for my soul.* Marg., *No man sought after my soul.* Heb., after my *life.* That is, No one sought to save my life; no one regarded it as of sufficient importance to attempt to preserve me.

5. *I cried unto thee, O* LORD. When there was no help; when I saw myself encompassed with dangers; when I looked on every hand and there was no *man* that would undertake for me. ¶ *I said, Thou* art *my refuge.* (*a*) My *only* refuge. I can go nowhere else. (*b*) Thou art *in fact* my refuge. I can and do put my trust in thee. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 1. ¶ And *my portion.* See Notes on Ps. xvi. 5. ¶ *In the land of the living.* Among all those that live—all living beings. There is no one else among the living to whom I can come but to thee, the living God. My hope is not in men, for they are against me; not in angels, for they have not the power to rescue me. It is God only, the living God, whom I make my confidence and the ground of my hope.

6. *Attend unto my cry.* Give ear to me when I cry to thee. Do not turn away and refuse to hear me. ¶ *For I am brought very low.* I am reduced greatly; I am made very poor. The language would be applicable to one who had been in better circumstances, and who had been brought down to a condition of danger, of poverty, of want. It is language which is commonly applied

7 Bring my soul out of prison,
[t] that I may praise thy name;
the righteous shall compass me
about, for thou shalt deal boun-
tifully [u] with me.

t Ps. cxlvi. 7; Isa. lxi. 1.
u Ps. xiii. 6; cxix. 17.

to poverty. ¶ *Deliver me from my persecutors.* Saul and his followers. ¶ *For they are stronger than I.* More in number; better armed; better fitted for battle.

7. *Bring my soul out of prison.* Bring me out of my present condition which is like a prison. I am as it were shut up; I am encompassed with foes; I do not know how to escape. Comp. Ps. xxv. 17. ¶ *That I may praise thy name.* Not merely for my own sake, but that I may have occasion more abundantly to praise thee; that thus *thou* mayest be honoured; — an object at all times much more important than our own welfare — even than our salvation. ¶ *The righteous shall compass me about.* They shall come to me with congratulations and with expressions of rejoicing. They will desire my society, my friendship, my influence, and will regard it as a privilege and an honour to be associated with me. David looked to this as an object to be desired. He wished to be associated with the righteous; to enjoy their friendship; to have their good opinion; to be reckoned as one of them here and for ever. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxvi. 9. It *is* an honour—a felicity to be desired—to be associated with good men, to possess their esteem; to have their sympathy, their prayers, and their affections; to share their joys here, and their triumphs in the world to come. ¶ *For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.* Or, when thou shalt deal bountifully with me. When thou dost show me this favour, then the righteous will come around me in this manner. They will see that I am a friend of God, and they will desire to be associated with me as his friend.

PSALM CXLIII.

A Psalm of David.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.

PSALM CXLIII.

This psalm also is entitled "A Psalm of David." There is, however, no intimation in the title as to the time or the occasion on which it was composed. In the Septuagint version, and the Latin Vulgate, it is said to have been written "when Absalom his son persecuted him." There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with this supposition, nor is there anything which necessarily restricts the application to that period of David's life. It would seem most natural that it should refer to the same trials as the previous psalm; and the sentiments in it are as applicable to the persecutions under Saul as to the rebellion of Absalom. There can be no doubt that it was composed when he was in danger and in trouble on account of malignant and powerful enemies; and it is of the same general character as many in the collection that were composed on those occasions. It is a psalm written in trouble; and, in a world like this, there will be always many hearts that can fully sympathize with the sentiments which are expressed in it.

1. *Hear my prayer, O* LORD, *give ear,* etc. See Notes on Ps. iv. 1; v. 1. ¶ *In thy faithfulness answer me.* That is, Show thy faithfulness to thy promises. God had made gracious promises to David (comp. Ps. lxxxix. 19–37), and he now pleads that he would remember those promises, and accomplish in his behalf what he had said he would. God has also made gracious promises to his people, and they may always plead those promises as a reason why they should be heard, and why their prayers should be answered. ¶ And *in thy righteousness.* Comp. Ps. xxxi. 1. In thy disposition to do right; to vindicate a righteous cause; to interpose when wrong is done. We, though sinners before God, may feel that our cause is a just one as towards our fellow-

2 And enter not [v] into judgment with thy servant: for [w] in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate.

[v] Job xiv. 3.

[w] Ps. cxxx. 3; Ex. xxxiv. 7; Job ix. 2, 3; Eccles. vii. 20; Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16.

men, and, when wronged, we may ask God to interpose, as a righteous God, in our behalf. We cannot, however, ask him to save us on the ground of our righteousness towards him, for we have no such righteousness. See ver. 2.

2. *And enter not into judgment with thy servant.* Do not deal with me on the ground of justice as towards *thee;* do not mark my own offences against thee, when I plead that justice may be done as between me and my fellow-men. While I plead that thou wouldst judge righteously between me and them, I am conscious that I could not claim thy needed interposition on the ground of any righteousness towards thee. There I must confess that I am a sinner; there I can rely only on mercy; there I could not hope to be justified. ¶ *For in thy sight.* As before thee; in thy presence; by thee. ¶ *Shall no man living.* No one of the race, no matter what his rank, his outward conduct, his gentleness, his amiableness, his kindness;—no matter how just and upright he may be towards his fellow-men. ¶ *Be justified.* Be regarded as righteous; be acquitted from blame; be held to be innocent. The meaning is, "I do not come before thee and plead for thy favour on the ground of any claim on thee, for I am conscious that I am a sinner, and that my only hope is in thy mercy." See Notes on Rom. iii. 20. Comp. Job iv. 17; ix. 2, 20; xv. 14–16; xxv. 4–6. This is a great and momentous truth in regard to man; it is the foundation of the necessity for a plan of salvation through an atonement—for some way in which man *may* properly be regarded and treated as righteous. Assuredly every man, conscious of what he is in himself, may and should fervently pray that God *would* not enter into judgment with him; that he would not mark his offences; that he would not judge him as strict justice would demand. Our hope is in the *mercy,* not in the *justice* of God.

3. *For the enemy hath persecuted my soul.* Has persecuted me; has sought my life. ¶ *He hath smitten my life down to the ground.* He has, as it were, trampled me down to the earth. The word rendered *smitten* means to break in pieces, to beat small, to crush. See Ps. lxxii. 4; lxxxix. 10; Job vi. 9. His very life seemed to be crushed out as one that is trodden down to the ground. ¶ *He hath made me to dwell in darkness.* He has made my life like that of one who dwells in darkness; he has made it a life of sorrow, so that I have no comfort—no light. ¶ *As those that have been long dead.* A similar expression occurs in Lam. iii. 6: "He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old." The same Hebrew words are used. The word rendered "*long*" means, age, duration, eternity: Ps. cxxxix. 24. The idea here is, that his condition was like that of those who had been long in their graves; who had long since ceased to see any light; whose abode was utter and absolute gloom.

4. *Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me.* See Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 3. Comp. Ps. xlii. 5–7. His spirit was broken and crushed. He was in a state of despair as to any human help. ¶ *My heart within me is desolate.* I have no comfort; no cheerfulness; no hope. My soul

5 I remember the days of old; [x] I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* [y] after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, [1] lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

8 Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; [z] for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way [a] wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from

x Ps. lxxvii. 5, 11. y Ps. lxiii. 1.
1 Or, *for I am become*, Ps. lxxxviii. 4.
z Ps. xxx. 5. a Ps. lxxiii. 24.

is like the waste desert where there is no water; where nothing grows; where there are only rocks and sands.

5. *I remember the days of old.* Former times. (1) As contrasted with my present condition. (2) As times when I called upon thee, and thou didst interpose. (3) As encouraging me now to come to thee, and spread out my case before thee. See Notes on Ps. lxxvii. 5–11; xlii. 4. ¶ *I meditate on all thy works*, etc. On what thou hast done; on thy gracious interpositions in the time of trial; on the manifestations of thy power in my behalf, and in behalf of thy people. I call all this to mind, remembering that thou art an unchangeable God; that thou hast the same power still; that thou canst interpose now as thou didst then; and that, as an unchangeable God, thou wilt do it in the same circumstances. I, therefore, come to thee, and pray that thou wilt interpose in my behalf.

6. *I stretch forth my hands unto thee.* In prayer. I have nowhere else to go. See Ps. lxxxviii. 9. ¶ *My soul* thirsteth *after thee, as a thirsty land.* As land in a time of drought *seems* to thirst for rain. See Notes on Ps. lxiii. 1. Comp. Ps. xlii. 1. The word rendered *thirsty* here means properly *weary*. The idea is that of a land which seems to be weary; which has no vigour of growth; and where everything seems to be exhausted. The same word occurs in Isa. xxxii. 2: "As the shadow of a great rock in a *weary* land."

7. *Hear me speedily, O* LORD. Hasten to hear me; do not delay. Literally, "Hasten; answer me." I am in imminent danger. Do not delay to come to my relief. ¶ *My spirit faileth.* My strength is declining. I can hold out no longer. I am ready to give up and die. ¶ *Hide not thy face from me.* Do not refuse or delay to look favourably upon me; to lift up the light of thy countenance upon me. ¶ *Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.* Marg., *For I am become like.* The idea is, Unless thou shalt lift up the light of thy countenance,—unless thou shalt interpose and help me, I shall die. The *pit* here refers to the grave. See Notes on Ps. xxviii. 1.

8. *Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness.* The voice of thy loving-kindness, or thy mercy and favour. Permit me to hear thee addressing me in the language of kindness, and with the assurances of mercy. ¶ *In the morning.* Early; speedily; with the first rays of the morning. Let it be, as it were, the first thing in the day; the first thing that is done. The idea is not that he would wait for another day, but that he would interpose as the very first act,—as when one enters on a day. See Notes on Ps. xlvi. 5, where the margin is, *when the morning appeareth*; Hebrew, *In the faces of the morning.* ¶ *For in thee do I trust.* I have no other confidence or ground of reliance; but I have confidence in thee. ¶ *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk*, etc. The safe way; the way in which I may find safety. See Notes on Ps. v. 8.

9. *Deliver me, O* LORD, *from mine enemies.* See Notes on Ps. lxix. 14. ¶ *I flee unto thee to hide me.* Marg.,

mine enemies: I [1] flee unto thee to hide me.

10 Teach [b] me to do thy will; for thou *art* my God; thy spirit *is* good; [c] lead me into the land of uprightness.[d]

11 Quicken [e] me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I *am* thy servant.

[1] *hide me with thee.*
[b] Micah iv. 2; 1 John ii. 27.
[c] Neh. ix. 20.
[d] Isa. xxvi. 10.
[e] Hab. iii. 2; Eph. ii. 1.

Hide me with thee. The Hebrew is, I hide myself with thee; that is, I take refuge with thee; I put myself under thy protection; I make myself thus secure, as thou art secure. See Notes on Ps. xvii. 8. Comp. Ps. xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20.

10. *Teach me to do thy will,* etc. To do that which will be agreeable or pleasing to thee; which will meet with thy approbation. That is, Teach me in the present emergency to do that which thou wilt approve; which will be wise; which will be best adapted to secure my deliverance and my safety. ¶ *Thy spirit* is *good.* The spirit which guides those who trust in thee; the spirit with which *thou* dost guide men. That spirit is wise, prudent, judicious, reliable. It will not lead astray. Grant me *that* spirit, and I shall be certain that I am going in the right path. There is no certain evidence that the psalmist here refers distinctively to the Holy Ghost, considered as the Third Person of the Trinity; but the prayer is one for guidance from on high in the day of darkness and trouble. It is an acknowledgment of dependence on God for direction, and the expression of confidence that under the Divine guidance he would not go astray. ¶ *Lead me into the land of uprightness.* Or rather here, "land of evenness;" level ground; ground where I may walk without the dangers to which I am exposed where I am now, in a place of ambuscades, caverns, rocks, where I may be assailed at any moment without the power of seeing my enemy, or of defending myself. See this use of the word in the following places where it is rendered *plain,*—meaning a level country, Deut. iii. 10; iv. 43; Josh. xiii. 9, 16, 17, 21; 1 Kings xx. 23, 25; Ps. xxvii. 11; Jer. xxi. 13; xlviii. 8, 21; Zech. iv. 7. He desired to be led, as it were, into a *level* country where he might be safe. It is not a prayer, as would seem from our translation, to be so guided that he might lead an upright life. Such a prayer is proper, but it is not the prayer offered here.

11. *Quicken me, O* LORD. Give me life. Comp. Notes on Eph. ii. 1. Make me equal to my circumstances, for I am ready to sink and to yield. ¶ *For thy name's sake.* For thine honour. Comp. Notes on Dan. ix. 17, 18. It is in thy cause. Thou wilt thus show thy power, thy faithfulness, thy goodness. Thou wilt thus get honour to thyself. This is the highest motive which can influence us,—that God may be glorified. ¶ *For thy righteousness' sake.* Thy justice; thy truth; thy faithfulness in performing thy promises and pledges. ¶ *Bring my soul out of trouble.* Out of this trouble and distress. See Notes on Ps. xxv. 17.

12. *And of thy mercy,* etc. Thy mercy to me; thy mercy to the world. The destruction of the wicked is a favour to the universe; just as the arrest and punishment of a robber or a pirate is a mercy to society, to mankind; just as every prison is a display of *mercy* as well as of *justice:*—mercy to society at large; justice to the offenders. ¶ *And destroy all them that afflict my soul.* Cut them off; render them powerless to do mischief. ¶ *For I* am *thy servant.* Not as a matter of private feeling,—not for personal re-

PSALM CXLIV.

A Psalm of David.

BLESSED *be* the LORD my [1] strength, *f* which teacheth my hands to [2] war, *and* my fingers to fight.

2 My [3] goodness and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

[1] *rock*, Ps. xviii. 2, 31. *f* Isa. xlv. 24.

[2] *the war.* [3] Or, *mercy.*

venge,—but because I am in thy service, and it is only by being delivered from these dangers that I can honour thee as I would. It is thine own cause, and I ask that they may be cut off *in order* that the service which I might render thee may be unembarrassed.

PSALM CXLIV.

This psalm is also ascribed to David. It is almost entirely a compilation of passages from other psalms,—particularly Ps. xviii.,—newly arranged. Comp. Ps. xviii. 34, with ver. 1; xviii. 2, 46, with ver. 2; xviii. 9, with ver. 5; xviii. 14, with ver. 6; xviii. 16, with ver. 7. Comp. also Ps. viii. 4, with ver. 3; civ. 32, with ver. 5; xxxiii. 2, 3, with ver. 9; xxxiii. 12, with ver. 15; cxxviii. 3, with ver. 12. In itself considered there is nothing improbable in the supposition that David himself should have made such a selection, or should have employed language which he had used before, adapting it now to a new purpose, and making such additions as would fit it for the new occasion for which it was intended. It would not be possible now, however, to ascertain the occasion on which this arrangement was made, or its specific design. There is, evidently, a remembrance of former mercies; there was impending danger; there is an earnest prayer that God would interpose as he had done in former times; there is a promise of new songs of praise if God would interpose; there is a looking forward to the prosperity—the joy—which would result if God did thus interpose and save the nation. In regard to the occasion on which the psalm was written, perhaps the conjecture of Kimchi is the most probable, that it is a prayer against the attempts of foreign nations to overthrow the Hebrew people, in some of the numerous wars in which David was engaged after he had come to the possession of the crown. The different parts of the psalm can be better explained on this supposition than perhaps on any other. This would make proper all the expressions in regard to the past (vers. 1, 2); the uncertainty and instability of earthly things and the weakness of man (vers. 3, 4); the necessity of the Divine interposition as in former times (vers. 5–8); the reference to foreigners (vers. 7, 8, 11); the purpose to praise God (vers. 9, 10); the allusion to the happiness of a people whose God is the Lord, and to the prosperity which would follow his interposition (vers. 12-15).

1. *Blessed* be *the* LORD *my strength.* Marg., as in Heb., *my rock.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 46, where the same expression occurs in the Hebrew. ¶ *Which teacheth my hands to war.* Heb., *To the war.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 34. The Hebrew is not precisely alike, but the sense is the same. ¶ And *my fingers to fight.* Heb., my fingers to the fight. That is, he teaches my fingers so that I can skilfully use them in battle. Probably the immediate reference here is to the use of the bow,—placing the arrow, and drawing the string.

2. *My goodness.* Marg., *my mercy.* That is, He shows me mercy or favour. All the favours that I receive come from him. ¶ *And my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 2, where the same words occur. ¶ *My shield.* The same word which in Ps. xviii. 2 is rendered *buckler.* See Notes on that passage. ¶ *And* he *in whom I trust.* The same idea as in Ps. xviii. 2. The tense of the verb only is varied. ¶ *Who subdueth my people under me.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 47. The language is slightly different, but the idea is the same. It is to be remarked that David *here* refers to his people,—

3 LORD, *g* what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him; *or* the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4 Man *h* is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.

5 Bow *i* thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth lightnings, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

g Ps. viii. 4. *h* Ps. xxxix. 5. *i* Isa. lxiv. 1.

"who subdueth *my* people,"—meaning that those over whom God had placed him had been made submissive by the Divine power.

3. LORD, *what* is *man, that thou takest knowledge of him?* The sentiment here is the same as in Ps. viii. 4, though the language is not precisely the same. See Notes on that passage. The word rendered "that thou takest knowledge of him," means here to take notice of; to regard. The idea is, It is amazing that a being so insignificant as man should be an object of interest to God, or that One so great should pay any attention to him and to his affairs. In Ps. viii. 4, the language is "that thou art mindful of him,"—that is, that thou dost remember him,—that thou dost not altogether pass him over. In Ps. viii. the remark is made in view of the heavens as being so exalted in comparison with man, and the wonder is, that in view of worlds so vast occupying the Divine attention, and needing the Divine care, *man*, so insignificant, does not pass out of his view altogether. Here the remark seems to be made in illustration of the idea that there is no strength in man; that he has no power to accomplish anything of himself; that he is entirely dependent on God. ¶ Or *the son of man.* Man—any of the race. See Notes on Ps. viii. 4. ¶ *That thou makest account of him!* Ps. viii. 4, "that thou visitest him." See Notes on that passage. The word here means "that thou shouldest *think* of him,"—that he should ever come into thy thought at all.

4. *Man is like to vanity.* See Notes on Ps. xxxix. 5, 6; lxii. 9. The idea here is, that man can be compared only with that which is utterly vain—which is emptiness—which is nothing. ¶ *His days* are *as a shadow that passeth away.* See Notes on Ps. cii. 11: "My days are like a shadow that declineth." The idea is essentially the same. It is, that as a shadow has no substance, and that as it moves along constantly as the sun declines, until it vanishes altogether, so man has nothing substantial or permanent, and so he is constantly moving off and will soon wholly disappear.

5. *Bow thy heavens, O* LORD, etc. Come to my aid *as if* the heavens were bent down; come down with all thy majesty and glory. See Notes on Ps. xviii. 9: "He bowed down the heavens also, and came down." What it is there declared that the Lord *had* done, he is here implored to do again. ¶ *Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.* See Notes on Ps. civ. 32: "He toucheth the hills, and they smoke." It is there affirmed as a characteristic of God that he *does* this; here the psalmist prays that, as this belonged to God, or was in his power, he *would* do it in his behalf. The prayer is, that God would come to his relief *as if* in smoke and tempest—in the fury of the storm.

6. *Cast forth lightnings, and scatter them.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 14: "He sent out his arrows, and scattered them." The allusion there is to lightning. The psalmist prays that God would do now again what he had then done. The Hebrew here is, "Lighten lightning;" that is, Send forth lightning. The word is used as a verb nowhere else. ¶ *Shoot out thine arrows,* etc. So in Ps. xviii. 14: "He shot out lightnings." The words are the same here as in that psalm, only that they are arranged differently. See Notes on that place.

7 Send thine [1] hand from above: rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery, *and* an instrument of ten strings, will I sing praises unto thee.

10 *It is he* that giveth [2] salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Rid me, and deliver me

[1] *hands.*

[2] Or, *victory.*

7. *Send thine hand from above.* Marg., as in Heb., *hands.* See Notes on Ps. xviii. 16: "He sent from above." ¶ *Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters.* Thus Ps. xviii. 16: "He took me, he drew me out of many waters." As God had done it once, there was ground for the prayer that he would do it yet again. ¶ *From the hand of strange children.* Strangers:—strangers to thee; strangers to thy people; foreigners. See Ps. liv. 3: "For strangers are risen up against me." The language would properly imply that at the time referred to in the psalm he was engaged in a warfare with foreign enemies. Who they were, we have no means now of ascertaining.

8. *Whose mouth speaketh vanity.* Vain things; things not real and true; falsehood; lies. See Notes on Ps. xxiv. 4. The idea is, that what they said had no foundation in truth—no reality. Truth is solid and reliable; falsehood is unreliable and vain. ¶ *And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* The meaning here seems to be that even under the solemnities of an oath, when they lifted up their hands to swear, when they solemnly appealed to God, there was no reliance to be placed on what they affirmed or promised. Oaths were taken by lifting up the right hand as towards God. See Gen. xiv. 22; Ex. vi. 8 (Marg., and Heb.); Deut. xxxii. 40.

9. *I will sing a new song unto thee, O God.* There will be occasion *in* such a deliverance, or manifestation of mercy, for a new expression of praise. On the phrase, "a new song," see Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 3. ¶ *Upon a psaltery,* and *an instrument of ten strings.* The word "and" should not have been inserted here. The idea is, "Upon a lyre or harp [Nebel] of ten strings, will I sing praise." See Notes on Isa. v. 12; and Ps. xxxiii. 2.

10. It is he *that giveth salvation unto kings.* Marg., *Victory.* The Hebrew word means *salvation,* but it is here used in the sense of deliverance or rescue. Even *kings,* with all their armies, have no hope but in God. They seem to be the most powerful of men, but they are, like all other men, wholly dependent on him for deliverance from danger. David thus recognizes his own entire dependence. Though a king in the Divine purpose and in fact, yet he had no power but as derived from God; he had no hope of deliverance but in him. It is implied further that God might as readily be supposed to be willing to interpose in behalf of kings as of other men when their cause was right, and when they looked to him for aid. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 16: "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host." Comp. Ps. xliv. 5, 6. ¶ *Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.* Who has done it; who can do it again; on whom alone David is dependent as all other men are. David speaks of himself by name elsewhere. See Ps. xviii. 50; 2 Sam. vii. 26. He refers to himself also under the name of "the king," Ps. lxi. 6; lxiii. 11. Cæsar, in his writings, often speaks of himself in the same way.

11. *Rid me, and deliver me,* etc. See Notes on vers. 7, 8. The language is here repeated. The prayer had been

from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

12 That our sons *may be* as plants [k] grown up in their youth; *that* our daughters *may be* as corner-stones, [1] polished *after* the similitude of a palace:

13 *That* our garners *may be* full, affording [2] all manner of store; *that* our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

k Ps. cxxviii. 3.

[1] *cut.* [2] *from kind to kind.*

interrupted by the thought that the answer to it would lay the foundation for praise, and by an acknowledgment of entire dependence on God. The psalmist now, after repeating the prayer, suggests what would result from the answer to it, and dwells on the happy consequences which must follow; the bright scenes in his own reign, in the prosperity of the people, in the happiness of the nation, in domestic comforts, and in the abundance which the land would produce when these dangers should pass away, when men now engaged in the conflict of arms might return to the peaceful pursuits of life, when families would be safe in their dwellings, and when the earth cultivated in time of peace would again produce abundance, vers. 12–14.

12. *That our sons* may be *as plants grown up in their youth.* That our sons—not called forth to the hardships of the tent and the field, the perils and the exposures of war—may grow up under the culture of home, of the family, in quiet scenes, as plants carefully cultivated and flourishing. Comp. Ps. cxxviii. 3. The Hebrew here is, "grown large in their youth;" not *grown up*, which has a paradoxical appearance. The meaning is, that they may be stout, strong, vigorous, well-formed, even in early life; that they may not be stunted in their growth, but be of full and manly proportions. ¶ That *our daughters* may be *as corner-stones.* The word here used — זָוִיּוֹת, *zaviyoth*—occurs only in the plural form, and means properly corners,—from a verb meaning to hide away, to conceal. The word is used respecting the corners of an altar, Zech. ix. 15; and seems here to refer to the corner columns of a palace or temple:—perhaps, as Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes, in allusion to the columns representing female figures so common in Egyptian architecture. ¶ *Polished.* Marg., *cut.* The idea is not that of *polishing* or *smoothing*, but of cutting or sculpturing. It is the stone carefully cut as an ornament. ¶ After *the similitude of a palace.* A more literal translation would be, "The likeness or model of a temple;" or, for the building of a temple. That is, that they may be such as may be properly compared with the ornamental columns of a temple or palace. The comparison is a very beautiful one, having the idea of grace, symmetry, fair proportions:—that on which the skill of the sculptor is most abundantly lavished.

13. That *our garners* may be *full.* That our fields may yield abundance, so that our granaries may be always filled. ¶ *Affording all manner of store.* Marg., *From kind to kind.* Heb., *From sort to sort;* that is, every sort or kind of produce or grain; all, in variety, that is needful for the supply of man and beast. ¶ That *our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.* A great part of the wealth of Palestine always consisted in flocks of sheep; and, from the earliest periods, not a few of the inhabitants were shepherds. This language, therefore, is used to denote national prosperity. ¶ *In our streets.* The Hebrew word here used means properly whatever is *outside;* what is out of doors or abroad, as opposed to what is within, as the inside of a house; and then, what is outside of a town, as opposed to what is within. It may, therefore, mean a

14 *That* our oxen *may be* [1] strong to labour: *that there be* no breaking in, nor going out; that *there be* no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy [l] *is that* people that is in such a case: *yea,* [m] happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

[1] *able to bear burdens,* or, *laden* with flesh.

l Deut. xxxiii. 29. *m* Ps. lxxix. 15.

street (Jer. xxxvii. 21; Job xviii. 17; Isa. v. 25); and then the country, the fields, pastures, etc.: Job v. 10; Prov. viii. 26. Here it refers to the pastures; the fields; the commons.

14. That *our oxen* may be *strong to labour.* Marg., *able to bear burdens;* or, *laden with flesh.* The Hebrew is simply loaded or laden:—that is, with a burden; or, with flesh; or, as Gesenius renders it, with young. The latter idea would best suit the connexion,—that of cattle producing abundantly or multiplying. ¶ That there be *no breaking in, nor going out.* No breaking in of other cattle into enclosed grounds, and no escape of those which are shut up for pasture. That property may be safe everywhere. The image is that of security, peace, order, prosperity. ¶ *That* there be *no complaining in our streets.* Literally, *outcry; clamour.* That the land may be at peace; that order and law may be observed; that the rights of all may be respected; that among neighbours there may be no strifes and contentions.

15. *Happy* is that *people that is in such a case.* In such a condition; or, where these things prevail. ¶ Yea, *happy* is that *people, whose God* is *the* LORD. Whose God is JEHOVAH; who worship and serve HIM as their God. The worship of Jehovah—the religion of Jehovah—is *adapted* to make a people happy; peaceful; quiet; blessed. Prosperity and peace, such as are referred to in the previous verses, are, and must be, the result of pure religion. Peace, order, abundance, attend it everywhere, and the best security for a nation's prosperity is the worship of God; that which is most certain to make a nation happy and blessed, is to acknowledge God and to keep his laws.

PSALM CXLV.

This is also a Psalm of David, and the last of the series in this part of the collection. It is entitled simply, "Of Praise," or, in the Hebrew, "Praise by David," or "Praise *of* David;"—that is, one of David's songs of praise. It is an *alphabetical* psalm; that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The arrangement in this respect is complete, except that the letter נ, *Nun*—*n*—is omitted, for which no reason can be assigned, unless it was from a desire that the psalm might consist of three equal parts of seven verses each. In the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, Latin Vulgate, and Æthiopic Versions, this omission is attempted to be supplied by inserting between vers. 13 and 14 a verse which in Hebrew would begin with a נ, *Nun,*—נֶאֱמָן, etc.:—"Faithful is the Lord in all his words, and holy in all his works." This is taken from ver. 17 of the psalm by the change of a word in the beginning—*faithful* for *righteous,*—נֶאֱמָן for צַדִּיק. There is no authority for this, however, in the MSS., and it is evidently an attempt to supply what seemed to be an omission or defect in the composition of the psalm. The verse is not in the Chaldee Paraphrase, or in the version of Aquila and Theodotion; and it is certain that as early as the time of Origen and Jerome it was not in the Hebrew text. The Masorites and the Jewish commentators reject it. The sense is in no way affected by the insertion or omission of this, since the verses of the psalm have no necessary connexion in meaning—the composition, as in most of the alphabetical psalms, being made up of independent sentiments suggested in part at least by the necessity of commencing each verse with a particular letter.

The psalm does not admit of any particular analysis, and it is impossible now to ascertain the occasion on which it was written.

PSALM CXLV.

David's *Psalm* of praise.

I WILL extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and [1] his greatness *is* [n] unsearchable.

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous [2] works.

6 And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare [3] thy greatness.

[1] *of his greatness* there is *no search.*

[n] Rom. xi. 33. [2] *things*, or, *words.* [3] *it.*

1. *I will extol thee,* etc. I will lift thee up; I will lift up thy name and praise, so that it may be heard afar. ¶ *And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.* I will bless or praise thee. I will do it now; I will do it in all the future. I will do it in time; I will do it in eternity. See Notes on Ps. xxx. 1.

2. *Every day will I bless thee,* etc. Comp. Ps. xcii. 2; lv. 17. As we receive blessings from God every day (comp. Lam. iii. 23), it is proper that we should render to him daily thanks; as God is the same always—"yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—it is proper that he should receive from day to day the tribute of praise; as we are daily dependent on him—one day as much as another—our recognition of that dependence should be daily; and as he will always be unchangeably the same, it will be proper that he should be praised for ever and ever. Two things are apparent from this verse:—(1) That a truly religious man *will* worship God every day; (2) that it is the fixed purpose of a truly religious man to continue this for ever.

3. *Great* is *the* LORD, *and greatly to be praised.* See Notes on Ps. xcvi. 4; xviii. 3. ¶ *And his greatness* is *unsearchable.* See Notes on Job v. 9; ix. 10; xi. 7, 8.

4. *One generation shall praise thy works,* etc. Shall praise thee on account of thy works or thy doings. That is, Thy praise shall be always kept up on the earth. See Notes on Isa. xxxviii. 19; Ps. xix. 2. One generation shall transmit the knowledge of thy works to another by praise—by hymns and psalms recording and celebrating thy praise. Successive generations of men shall take up the language of praise, and it shall thus be transmitted to the end of time. ¶ *And shall declare thy mighty acts.* Thy works of strength or power. God's greatness—his infinity—is in itself a just ground of praise, for we should rejoice that there is One Infinite Eternal Being; and as all that greatness is employed in the cause of truth, of law, of good order, of justice, of kindness, of mercy, it should call forth continued praise in all parts of his dominions.

5. *I will speak.* That is, in my acts of praise. I will not be ashamed to be known as his worshipper; I will publicly declare my belief in his existence, his greatness, his goodness. ¶ *Of the glorious honour of thy majesty.* The glory of the honour of thy majesty. This accumulation of epithets shows that the heart of the psalmist was full of the subject, and that he laboured to find language to express his emotions. It is beauty; it is glory; it is majesty:—it is all that is great, sublime, wonderful—all combined—all concentrated—in one Being. ¶ *And of thy wondrous works.* Marg., *things,* or *words.* The reference is to wondrous deeds or acts considered as the subject of discourse or praise.

6. *And* men *shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts.* The force, the power of those things done by thee which are fitted to inspire fear

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

8 The LORD [o] *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and [1] of great mercy.

9 The LORD *is* good [p] to all; and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

o Num. xiv. 18. [1] *great in.* *p* Nahum i. 7.

or reverence. The great *power* displayed in those acts shall be a ground or reason for celebrating thy praise. The manifestations of that power will so deeply impress the minds of men, that they will be led to speak of them. ¶ *And I will declare thy greatness.* Heb., "And thy greatness, I will declare it." In respect to that, I will recount it, or I will make it known to others.

7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness.* Heb., The memory of the greatness of thy goodness they will pour forth. The word rendered "abundantly utter" means to bud forth, to gush out, to flow, as a fountain. Prov. xviii. 4; i. 23; xv. 2, 28. It is applied to words as poured forth in praise. The meaning is, that the heart is full, as a fountain is full of water, and that it naturally overflows, or seeks to discharge itself. The thought of the goodness of God fills the heart, and makes it overflow with gratitude. ¶ *And shall sing of thy righteousness.* They shall shout for joy at the displays of thy justice; at the manifestations of thy righteous character.

8. *The* LORD is *gracious.* See Notes on Ps. lxxxvi. 5, 15. ¶ *And full of compassion.* Kind; compassionate; ready to do good. See Notes on Ps. ciii. 8. ¶ *Slow to anger.* See Ps. ciii. 8, where the same expression occurs. ¶ *And of great mercy.* Marg., *great in mercy.* His greatness is shown in his mercy; and the manifestation of that mercy is great:—great, as on a large scale; great, as manifested towards great sinners; great, in the sacrifice made that it may be displayed; great, in the completeness with which sin is pardoned—pardoned so as to be remembered no more.

9. *The* LORD is *good to all.* To all his creatures. That is, he is kind and compassionate towards them; he is disposed and ready to do them good. There is not one of them whom he is not ready and willing to bless; not one whose happiness would not be agreeable to him, or whose welfare he is not ready to promote. Comp. Ps. c. 5. ¶ *And his tender mercies* are *over all his works.* In all that he has made there is evidence that he is a kind and benevolent God. He has a heart to love, to bless, what he has made; everywhere arrangements are made for happiness; he is not disposed to cast off the feeble, the erring, and the suffering; he is willing to receive back again those who have wandered from him, to pardon the offending, to wipe away the tears of the sorrowful.

10. *All thy works shall praise thee.* Or, do praise thee; that is, all thy works show what thou art, and combine in setting forth thy perfections. See Notes on Ps. xix. 1. ¶ *And thy saints shall bless thee.* Or, do bless thee. All those who are holy in heaven and on earth, the angels around thy throne, and thy people below, all combine to proclaim thy praise.

11. *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom.* Of thy reign; of the great principles of thy government and laws. They see in that reign evidence that thou art worthy of universal praise. Seeing this, it becomes to them a subject on which they talk or converse (comp. Mal. iii. 16)—a subject of interest to their

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom *is* [1] an everlasting [q] kingdom, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

[1] *a kingdom of all ages.*

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.

15 The eyes of all [2] wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

[q] Dan. ii. 44. [2] *look unto.*

hearts, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Men talk about that which interests them; those things in which they have pleasure; those which they desire to understand; those in which they see difficulties that they would wish to have solved. It is one of the characteristics of the "saints"—of the people of God—that they *do* talk about God and his kingdom; that the subject is to them a pleasant theme of meditation and conversation; that *they* have the kind of pleasure in talking about God which other men have in conversing about their farms or their merchandise, their children and friends, the news of the day, politics, literature, or science. ¶ *And talk of thy power.* As put forth in the works of creation; as manifested in the dispensations of thy providence; as evinced in the conversion of sinners; as displayed in carrying thy truth around the world; as exhibited in sustaining the sufferer, and in giving peace and support to the dying.

12. *To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts.* To bring other men to understand and to appreciate the evidences of the power of God. A man who sees this himself will wish that others may see it also. This is the foundation of the desire which warms and animates the heart of the Christian missionary—the desire to make the great truths of redemption known as far as possible, even to the ends of the earth. ¶ *And the glorious majesty of his kingdom.* And the glory of the majesty of his reign. They wish to communicate the knowledge of this to those ignorant of it. They themselves see this to be glorious, and they wish that all others may see it also.

13. *Thy kingdom* is *an everlasting kingdom,* etc. See Notes on Ps. x. 16; Dan. iv. 34. The meaning is, that the reign of God will continue for ever and ever. It will never pass away as other dominions do; it will not change as dynasties do among men; it will not be overthrown as they are; its great principles will stand firm for ever and ever. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxii. 17.

14. *The* LORD *upholdeth all that fall.* The word here used is a participle, literally, "The Lord sustaining;" that is, the Lord *is* a Sustainer or Upholder of all that fall. The allusion is to those who have no power to go of themselves; who would sink under the burdens of life if they were not supported. The idea is, that it is a characteristic of the Lord, that he *does* sustain such; that all such may confidently look to him to uphold them. ¶ *And raiseth up all* those that be *bowed down.* The word here also is a participle: "he is lifting up;" that is, he is a lifter up. The reference is to those who are bent and bowed under the duties, the cares, the trials of life; who go bowed down under those burdens. God is able to strengthen them so that they can bear those burdens without being crushed under them.

15. *The eyes of all wait upon thee.* Marg., *Look unto thee.* All creatures, on the land, in the air, in the waters; all in heaven; all throughout the universe. That is, It is *as if* all directed their eyes to thee imploringly for the supply of their wants. To no one else can they look for those things which are needful for

16 Thou [r] openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

17 The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and [1] holy in all his works.

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

[r] Ps. civ. 28.

[1] Or, *merciful*, or, *bountiful*.

them. A universe thus looks every day, every hour, every moment, to its God! How sublime the scene! ¶ *And thou givest them their meat in due season.* See Notes on Ps. civ. 27, where the same words occur.

16. *Thou openest thine hand.* By the mere opening of the hand all needful gifts are bestowed on the creatures dependent on thee. The same words are found in Ps. civ. 28; see Notes on that passage. ¶ *And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.* All kinds of creatures:—men, fowls, beasts, fishes, insects—the innumerable multitudes that swarm on the earth, in the air, in the waters. In Ps. civ. 28, it is, "They are filled with good." The meaning is essentially the same. Of course this is to be taken in a general sense. It cannot mean that absolutely no one ever wants, or ever perishes from want, but the idea is that of the amazing beneficence and fulness of God in being able and willing to satisfy such multitudes; to keep them from perishing by cold, or hunger, or nakedness. And, in fact, how few birds perish by hunger; how few of the infinite number of the inhabitants of the sea; how few animals that roam over deserts, or in vast plains; how few men; how few even of the insect tribes—how few in the world revealed by the microscope—the world beneath us—the innumerable multitudes of living things too small even to be *seen* by the naked eye of man!

17. *The* LORD is *righteous in all his ways.* In his own character; in his laws; in his providential dealings; in his arrangements for the redemption and salvation of man. In his own character he is what it is desirable that a God should be; in all his laws he ordains that only which it is desirable should be enacted; in all his dealings with men he does that which it is desirable should be done. He violates no right; he wrongs no one; he demands of no one a service which would be unjust; he makes no arrangements for pardon and salvation which it is not best should be made. It is much for a man to be able to say in all that occurs to him under the Divine administration, "It is *right*;" it is much for a man to have such confidence in God as to be able to feel that all he does in respect to nations is the best thing that could be done. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 14; xcvii. 2. ¶ *And holy in all his works.* Marg., *merciful*, or *bountiful*. The Hebrew word is *merciful*. The idea seems to be that righteousness and mercy are equally consulted in his arrangements; that they meet together, and act harmoniously in the Divine plans. Comp. Notes on Ps. lxxxv. 10.

18. *The* LORD is *nigh unto all them that call upon him.* There is a sense in which he is "nigh" to all, for he is everywhere present; but there is a special sense in which he *seems* to be nigh to us; in which he *manifests* himself to us; in which he gives us *evidence* of his presence. It is in prayer, in praise, in his ordinances,—in his gracious interpositions in our behalf,—in the peace and joy which we have in communion with him. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 18: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." ¶ *To all that call upon him in truth.* In sincerity; not hypocritically; worshipping him as the true God, and with a sincere desire to obtain his favour. Comp. Notes on John iv. 24. We can have no hope that God will hear us unless we are sincere in our worship. He sees

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

20 The LORD preserveth all them that love [s] him; but all the wicked will he destroy.

21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD; [t] and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

s Ex. xx. 6. t Rev. v. 13.

the heart, and he will act towards us as we *are*, and not as we *profess* to be.

19. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.* Of those who worship him with reverence,—those who are his true friends. See Notes on Matt. vii. 7, 8; John xiv. 14; 1 John v. 14; Ps. xxxiv. 15. ¶ *He also will hear their cry, and will save them.* He will regard their *expressed* desire —their earnest prayer.

20. *The* LORD *preserveth all them that love him.* He keeps them; watches over them; defends them; makes them the object of his care. See Notes on Ps. xxxi. 20, 23; xcvii. 10. ¶ *But all the wicked will he destroy.* All that are found ultimately to be wicked; all that on the final trial deserve to be classed with the wicked. See Notes on Ps. ix. 17; xi. 6; Matt. xxv. 46.

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the* LORD. That is, I will utter his praise. In view of all these things, in view of his character and doings, I will praise him. I will be found among those who honour him; who acknowledge him as the true God; who render homage for what he is, and thanks for what he has done. ¶ *And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.* All men; all that dwell upon the earth. Let his praise be universal and eternal. This is the language of true piety; all in whose bosom there is any true religion will heartily say *Amen.* No desire of a pious heart is more constant and strong than that God should be praised, adored, honoured by all intelligent creatures; that he should be known and acknowledged in all the earth as the true God; that his praise should ascend from all parts of the universe for ever. See Notes on Ps. c.

PSALM CXLVI.

This psalm is without a title, and it is impossible to ascertain by whom, or on what occasion, it was composed. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the title is, "Hallelujah. Of Haggai and Zechariah." But this is without authority, and it is not known how it came to be prefixed. The same title occurs in the Arabic Version. The Syriac Version has the title still more in full: "Spoken by Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, who ascended from the captivity at Babylon, concerning the morning ministration of the priests;" that is, to be used in their morning services. The tradition, therefore, would seem to be that this is a composition of those prophets. That it *may* have belonged to the times of Haggai and Zechariah is certainly possible, nor is there anything *in* the psalm inconsistent with that supposition, though there is no positive evidence that it is so. In this portion of the Psalms (cxlvi.–cl.) all begin and end in the same manner, with a Hallelujah; they all belong to one group, and seem to pertain to the same occasion; and it is not improbable that they constitute a series of psalms intended to commemorate the completion of the walls of Jerusalem, and the finishing of the temple. They would be eminently appropriate to such an event.

This psalm is a general psalm of praise which might be used at any time, containing thoughts such as are appropriately suggested by a contemplation of the character of God, and his dealings with men. The idea is that of the blessedness of trusting in God; the security of those who do it; the superiority of this confidence and peace over any which is reposed in princes; and the evidence that it will be safe to trust in him, furnished by his merciful interpositions in behalf of the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the bowed down, the righteous, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

The psalm, then, has these parts:—

I. An expression of a purpose to praise

PSALM CXLVI.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise [u] the LORD, O my soul.

2 While [v] I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

3 Put [w] not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no [2] help.

4 His breath goeth forth, he

[1] *Hallelujah.* [u] Ps. ciii. 1. [v] Ps. civ. 33. [w] Isa. ii. 22; Jer. xvii. 5, 7.

[2] Or, *salvation.*

God; or, God as an object of praise, vers. 1, 2.

II. Reliance is not to be put in man, even in princes, since all are mortal, vers. 3, 4.

III. God is the only Being on whom we can rely, 5–9.

(1) The happiness of that reliance, ver. 5.

(2) Reasons for such reliance, vers. 6–9. He is the Creator of all things; he keeps truth; he executes judgment for the oppressed; he shows his kindness towards the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the bowed down, the righteous, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

IV. God will reign for ever, and he is the God of Zion. His people, therefore, should praise him, ver. 10.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. "Ye;"—all people. Marg., *Hallelujah.* See Ps. civ. 35; cvi. 1. ¶ *Praise the* LORD, *O my soul.* See Notes on Ps. ciii. 1; civ. 1.

2. *While I live will I praise the* LORD, etc. See Notes on Ps. civ. 33, where the same language occurs substantially as in this verse: "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being." The idea is, not merely that he would praise him during this life—short and fleeting as it is—but that as long as he had an existence—in the future world — for ever he would praise him.

> "Through every period of my life
> Thy goodness I'll pursue;
> And after death, in distant worlds,
> The glorious theme renew.
> Through all eternity to Thee
> A joyful song I'll raise;
> But, oh! eternity's too short
> To utter all thy praise."—*Addison.*

3. *Put not your trust in princes.* Rely on God rather than on man, however exalted he may be. There is a work of protection and salvation which no man, however exalted he may be, can perform for you; a work which God alone, who is the Maker of all things, and who never dies, can accomplish. See Notes on Ps. cxviii. 8, 9. Comp. also Notes on Isa. ii. 22: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" ¶ Nor *in the son of man. Any* son of man; any human being, no matter what his rank or power. The phrase is often used to denote *man.* See Notes on Ps. viii. 4. The appellation "Son of man" was often applied by the Saviour to himself to express emphatically the idea that he was *a man*—that he had a human nature; that he was identified with the race; that he was a brother, a fellow-sufferer, a friend of man:—that he was not a cold and abstract being so exalted that he could not feel or weep over the sins and woes of a fallen and suffering world. The language here, however, it is scarcely necessary to say, does not refer to him. It *is* right to put our trust in *him;* we have no other trust. ¶ *In whom* there is *no help.* Marg., *salvation.* So the Hebrew. The idea is, that man cannot save us. He cannot save himself; he cannot save others.

4. *His breath goeth forth.* He dies like other men, no matter how exalted he is. See Notes on Isa. ii. 22. ¶ *He returneth to his earth.* See Notes on Ps. xc. 3. The earth—the dust—*is "his:"*—(*a*) It is *his,* as that from which he was made:—he turns back to what he was. Gen. iii. 19: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (*b*) The earth—

x returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

5 Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the LORD his God.

6 Which y made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is*; which keepeth truth for ever;

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the z hungry. The LORD looseth a the prisoners:

x Eccles. xii. 7. y Rev. xiv 7.
z Luke i. 53. a Ps. lxviii. 6; cvii. 14.

the dust—the grave is *his*, as it is his home—the place where he will abide. (*c*) It is *his*, as it is the only property which he has in reversion. All that a man—a prince, a nobleman, a monarch, a millionaire—will soon have will be his grave,—his few feet of earth. *That* will be his by right of possession; by the fact that, for the time being, he will occupy it, and not another man. But that, too, may soon become another man's grave, so that even there he is a tenant only for a time; he has no permanent possession *even of a grave*. How poor is the richest man! ¶ *In that very day*. The very day—the moment—that he dies. ¶ *His thoughts perish*. His purposes; his schemes; his plans; his purposes of conquest and ambition; his schemes for becoming rich or great; his plans of building a house, and laying out his grounds, and enjoying life; his design of making a book, or taking a journey, or giving himself to ease and pleasure. Luke xii. 19, 20: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; but God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Such are all the purposes of men!

5. *Happy* is he that *hath the God of Jacob for his help*. Who may rely for protection on the God who defended Jacob in his travels and dangers. Or, perhaps the word *Jacob* is here used collectively to denote *Israel*—the Jewish people:—the God whom they adore and worship, rather than the gods of the heathen. Comp. Notes on Ps. cxliv. 15; liv. 4. ¶ *Whose hope is in the* LORD *his God*. In Jehovah, worshipped as his God. That is, who truly worships Jehovah, or makes Jehovah his God.

6. *Which made heaven and earth*, etc. Who is the true God, the Creator of all things. Happy is he who can address the God who called all this wondrous universe into being, and who sustains all by his power, as *his* God. ¶ *Which keepeth truth for ever*. Who is always true to his promises. In this verse there are *two* reasons given why the lot of the people of God would be a happy one: (1) That Jehovah is the true God, the Creator of all things, and, therefore, able to protect and provide for them. (2) That he is faithful, and may always be relied on. Idol-gods have no power, and every reliance placed on them is a vain reliance; men are often false and cannot be trusted, but Jehovah has infinite power, and every promise that he makes will be fulfilled; all that he says is eternally and unchangeably true. The reasons for trusting in him, or the reasons why they who trust in him are "happy," are further stated in the following verses.

7. *Which executeth judgment for the oppressed*. This is the *third* reason why the lot of those is a happy one who trust in God. It is because he has power to pronounce and execute a right judgment or sentence in regard to the oppressed and the wronged, and because it is characteristic of his nature that he does thus execute judgment. See Notes on Ps. ciii. 6: "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." ¶ *Which giveth food to the hungry*. See Notes on Ps. cvii. 9: "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with

8 The LORD [b] openeth *the eyes of* the blind: the LORD raiseth them [c] that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

[b] Matt. ix. 30; John ix. 6, etc.; 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[c] Ps. cxlvii. 6; Luke xiii. 13.

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he [d] relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he [e] turneth upside down.

[d] Prov. xv. 25. [e] Job xii. 13, 14; Prov. iv. 19.

goodness." This is the *fourth* reason why they who confide in God are happy. Comp. Luke i. 53: "He hath filled the hungry with good things." ¶ *The* LORD *looseth the prisoners.* This is the *fifth* reason why they who trust in the Lord are "happy." Comp. Notes on Ps. lxviii. 6: "He bringeth out those which are bound with chains." See also Notes on Ps. cvii. 10: "Being bound in affliction and iron." Comp. Job xxxvi. 8, 9.

8. *The* LORD *openeth* the eyes of *the blind.* This is the *sixth* reason for what is stated as to the blessedness of those who put their trust in the Lord. The language here would be applicable to bodily or to mental blindness. Comp. Notes on Ps. cxix. 18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." See also Notes on Isa. xxxv. 5: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened." ¶ *The* LORD *raiseth them that are bowed down.* This is the *seventh* reason why they are happy who trust in the Lord. It is that those who are crushed and bowed down under the weight of care, trouble, and calamity, are raised up by him, or are sustained and comforted. See Notes on Ps. cxlv. 14: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." ¶ *The* LORD *loveth the righteous.* This is the *eighth* reason why those who trust in the Lord are happy. It is a characteristic of God, and a foundation for praise, that he loves those who obey law; who do that which is right.

9. *The* LORD *preserveth the strangers.* He regards them with interest; he defends and guides them. This is the *ninth* reason why those who trust in the Lord are happy. The stranger—away from home and friends; with no one to feel an interest in him, or sympathy for him; with the feeling that he is forsaken; with no one on whom he can call for sympathy in distress—may find in God one who will regard his condition; who will sympathize with him; who is able to protect and befriend him. Comp. Ex. xii. 49; xxii. 21; xxiii. 9; Lev. xix. 33; Deut. i. 16; x. 18, 19; Isa. lvi. 3, 6. ¶ *He relieveth the fatherless and widow.* He is their friend. This is the *tenth* reason why those who put their trust in the Lord are happy. It is that God is the Friend of those who have no earthly protector. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 5: "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." ¶ *But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.* He overturns their plans; defeats their schemes; makes their purposes accomplish what they did not intend they should accomplish. The Hebrew word here means to bend, to curve, to make crooked, to distort; then, to overturn, to turn upside down. The same word is applied to the conduct of the wicked, in Ps. cxix. 78: "They dealt perversely with me." The idea here is, that their path is not a straight path; that God makes it a crooked way; that they are diverted from their design; that through them he accomplishes purposes which they did not intend; that he prevents their accomplishing their own designs; and that he will make their plans subservient to a higher and better purpose than their own. This is the *eleventh* reason why those who put their trust in God are happy. It is that God is worthy of confidence and love, because he has all the plans of wicked men entirely under his control.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, *even* thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

PSALM CXLVII.

PRAISE ye the LORD: for *it is* [f] good to sing praises unto our God: for *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely.

2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth together the outcasts [g] of Israel.

3 He [h] healeth the broken in

[f] Ps. xcii. 1. [g] Deut. xxx. 3, 4. [h] Isa. lxi. 1.

10. *The* LORD *shall reign for ever.* See Notes on Ps. x. 16: "The Lord is King for ever and ever." Comp. Ex. xv. 18. ¶ Even *thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.* As long as the world shall endure. There shall be no change of dynasty as there is in human governments; but the same King shall reign from age to age. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelu-jah. The psalm closes as it commences. It is a call on all persons to unite in the praise of Jehovah.

PSALM CXLVII.

The author of this psalm is unknown; nor can the occasion on which it was composed be ascertained with any degree of certainty. In the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Syriac Versions, it is ascribed, like the previous psalm, to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Syriac has this title:—"A Psalm of Haggai and Zechariah, when they urged the completion of the temple of Jerusalem." It is quite manifest, from vers. 2, 13, 14, that the psalm was written after the return from the Babylonish captivity, and that probably on the completion of the temple after that return, with a view to be employed at its dedication. See Introd. to Ps. cxlvi.

This psalm comprises two themes:—praise to God for his goodness to his creatures generally; and special praise for his goodness to his people. These topics are intermingled in the psalm, but the former is more prominent in the first part of the psalm; the latter in the close. Both were proper themes at the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of the city, after the return from the exile. Both are proper now, and will be so always.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelu-jah. See Ps. cxlvi. 1. ¶ *For* it is *good to sing praises unto our God.* See Notes on Ps. xcii. 1: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." ¶ *For* it is *pleasant.* See Notes on Ps. cxxxv. 3: "Sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant." The Hebrew word is the same. ¶ And *praise is comely.* Becoming; proper. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 1: "praise is comely for the upright." The Hebrew word is the same. If these psalms were composed for the re-dedication of the temple, it would not be unnatural that much of the language employed should be borrowed from earlier psalms with which the people were familiar.

2. *The* LORD *doth build up Jerusalem.* He builds up the walls; he restores the city; he has caused the temple to be reconstructed. This language would be applicable to a return from the captivity. There *may* be an allusion here to the language in Ps. cii. 16: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." See Notes on that passage. What is there spoken of as what would be in the future is here spoken of as accomplished, and as a ground of praise. ¶ *He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.* Those who have been exiled from their native land, and who have been scattered as outcasts in a foreign country. This is appropriate language to use on the supposition that the psalm was composed after the return from the exile, for it is in such language that that return was predicted by the prophets. Isa. xi. 12: "And he shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah," etc. Isa. lvi. 8: "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel," etc.

3. *He healeth the broken in heart.* Referring primarily to the fact that

heart, and bindeth up their [1] wounds.

4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names.

5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: [2] his understanding *is* infinite.

6 The LORD lifteth up the [k] meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God;

[1] *griefs.*
[2] *of his understanding* there *is no number.*
[i] Isa. xl. 28. [k] Ps. xxv. 9; Matt. v. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 4.

he had healed those who were crushed and broken in their long captivity, and that he had given them comfort by returning them to their native land. At the same time, however, the language is made general, as describing a characteristic of God that he *does* this; that it is his character to do this. See Notes on Ps. xxxiv. 18. See also Ps. li. 17. Comp. Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18. ¶ *And bindeth up their wounds.* See Notes on Isa. i. 6. Marg., *griefs.* The word refers to those who are afflicted with griefs and troubles. The reference is to mental sorrows; to a troubled spirit; to a heart made sad in any way. God has provided healing for such; on such he bestows peace.

4. *He telleth the number of the stars.* He counts them all. God only can do this. The stars are so numerous that no astronomer can count them; they lie so far in the depths of space, and are so remote from each other, that no man can be so presumptuous as to suppose that he has even *seen* any considerable part of them, even by the aid of the most powerful telescopes. ¶ *He calleth them all by* their *names.* As if each one had a name, and God could call them forth one by one by their names, like the muster-roll of an army. This language seems to be taken from Isa. xl. 26: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by numbers; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." See Notes on that passage.

5. *Great* is *our Lord.* See Notes on Ps. xlviii. 1. ¶ *And of great power.* This seems to be added, as in Isa. xl. 28, in view of the power required in making the heavens, and in guiding and numbering the stars: "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" ¶ *His understanding* is *infinite.* Marg., *Of his understanding there is no number.* That is, This corresponds with his power to number the stars. There is no limit to it. It is not bounded; there is no point reached where it can be said that *there is no more;* that it is exhausted. See Notes on Isa. xl. 28: "There is no searching of his understanding."

6. *The* LORD *lifteth up the meek.* The humble; the poor; the bowed down; the oppressed. See Notes on Ps. cxlvi. 8: "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." ¶ *He casteth the wicked down to the ground.* See Notes on Ps. cxlvi. 9: "The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."

7. *Sing unto the* LORD *with thanksgiving.* Accompany the praise of God —the expression of worship—with a grateful remembrance of the past. The one will aid the other, and the two will constitute acceptable and proper worship. The first word here means properly to answer, or respond; and the idea would seem to be, that we are to make a suitable *response* or *answer* to the manifold favours which we have received at the hand of God. ¶ *Sing praise upon the harp unto our God.* On the word *harp,* see Notes on Isa. v. 12. The harp was an instrument commonly employed in Divine worship. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2:

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

9 He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens [l] which cry.

10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

11 The [m] LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

[l] Job xxxviii. 41; Matt. vi. 26.

[m] Isa. lxii. 4; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

"Praise the Lord with harp." Comp. Ps. xliii. 4; xlix. 4; lvii. 8; lxxi. 22.

8. *Who covereth the heaven with clouds.* Clouds that are designed to convey refreshing rain to the earth. The reasons for praise here stated (vers. 8, 9) are derived from the goodness of God as exhibited in his providential arrangements for the good of man. ¶ *Who prepareth rain for the earth.* By causing it to be taken from the sea, carried by the clouds, and conveyed through the air to the places where it is needed, and then gently sprinkled on the earth. Comp. Notes on Ps. civ. 13: "He watereth the hills from his chambers." See also Notes on Job v. 10; xxviii. 26; xxxvi. 27, 28; xxxviii. 28, 37. ¶ *Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.* Which would be barren but for the rain. Who conveys the water thus to the very tops of the mountains, and causes it to descend on their sides, so that even the mountains are clothed with verdure and beauty. Comp. Notes on Ps. civ. 14: "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle."

9. *He giveth to the beast his food.* To the wild beast; to the animals that cannot toil for it themselves, as man does. Comp. Notes on Ps. civ. 21, 27, 28. ¶ *To the young ravens which cry.* Comp. Notes on Job xxxviii. 41. See also Ps. cxlv. 15.

10. *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse.* The horse is among the noblest works of God—perhaps the noblest of all the animals that he has made. See Notes on Job xxxix. 19–25. Yet God regards with more interest and pleasure humble piety than he does any mere power, however great and wonderful it may be. ¶ *He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.* Not the same pleasure as in piety; he prefers the humble heart to this. The reference is to man as capable of rapid marches, of quick movements in assaulting an enemy; the allusion being, perhaps, to an army prepared for war,—cavalry and infantry,—the horse moving on with resistless force,—the foot-soldiers with rapid motion.

11. *The* LORD *taketh pleasure in them that fear him.* In those who truly worship him, however humble, poor, and unknown to men they may be; however unostentatious, retired, unnoticed may be their worship. Not in the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of war" is his pleasure; not in the march of armies; not in the valour of the battle-field; not in scenes where "the garments of the warrior are rolled in blood,"—but in the closet, when the devout child of God prays; in the family, when the group bend before him in solemn devotion; in the assembly—quiet, serious, calm—when his friends are gathered together for prayer and praise; in the heart that truly loves, reverences, adores him. ¶ *In those that hope in his mercy.* It is a pleasure to him to have the guilty, the feeble, the undeserving *hope* in him—trust in him—seek him.

12. *Praise the* LORD, *O Jerusalem,* etc. In addition to this general praise in which all may unite, there are special reasons why Jerusalem and its inhabitants should praise God:—just as now, in addition to the general reasons pertaining to all men why they should praise God, there are special reasons why Chris-

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children [n] within thee.

14 [1] He maketh peace *in* thy borders, *and* filleth thee with the [2] finest of the wheat.

15 He [o] sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

n Ps. cxv. 14.
[1] *Who maketh thy border peace.*
[2] *fat of wheat,* Ps. lxxxi. 16; Deut. xxxii. 14.
o Ps. cvii. 20.

tians—why his redeemed people—should do it. What those reasons, as pertaining to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were, is specified in the following verses.

13. *For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.* He has made thee safe and secure—as if he had given additional strength to the fastenings of the gates of the city. Cities were surrounded by walls. They were entered through gates. Those gates were fastened by bars passed across them, to which the gates were secured. The *language* here might be applicable to any period, but it is probable that there is particular reference to Jerusalem as made strong in rebuilding it after the return from Babylon. ¶ *He hath blessed thy children within thee.* The inhabitants, by giving them safety and peace.

14. *He maketh peace* in *thy borders.* Marg., *he maketh thy border peace.* The word *border* here refers to a boundary, and stands for all the domain or territory included within the boundaries of a country. The idea is, that peace prevailed throughout the land. ¶ And *filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.* Marg., as in Heb., *fat of wheat.* Literally, "He satisfies thee with the fat of wheat." There is no want of wheat, and that of the best kind. Comp. Notes on Ps. cxxxii. 15: "I will satisfy her poor with bread."

15. *He sendeth forth his commandment* upon *earth.* That is, with reference to the productions of the earth; to the changes which occur; to the seasons; to snow, frost, ice, cold, heat, wind; and he is universally and immediately obeyed. Nature everywhere yields a ready acquiescence to his will. ¶ *His word runneth very swiftly.* As if it hastened to obey him. There is no delay. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 9: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Snow, and frost, and ice, and cold, and heat, and wind, are entirely obedient to him. There is no reluctance in obeying him; there is no delay.

16. *He giveth snow like wool.* He covers the earth with snow, so that it *seems* to have a clothing of wool. Comp. Notes on Job xxxvii. 6: "For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth." ¶ *He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.* As if ashes were strewed over the earth; or, as easily as one strews ashes.

17. *He casteth forth his ice like morsels.* The word rendered *morsels* means properly a bit, a crumb, as of bread, Gen. xviii. 5; Judges xix. 5. The allusion here would seem to be to hail, which God sends upon the earth as easily as one scatters crumbs of bread from the hand. ¶ *Who can stand before his cold?* Or, hail. The word is the same, except in pointing, as the preceding word rendered *ice.* The idea is that no one can stand before the peltings of the hail, when God sends it forth, or scatters it upon the earth.

18. *He sendeth out his word.* He commands: or, he speaks. ¶ *And*

19 He [p] sheweth his [1] word unto Jacob, his statutes [q] and his judgments unto Israel.

20 He [r] hath not dealt so with any nation; and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

[p] Deut. xxxiii. 3, 4; Rom. iii. 2.

[1] *words.*

[q] Mal. iv. 4.

[r] Deut. iv. 32—34.

melteth them. Melts the snow and the ice. Comp. Notes on Job xxxvii. 10–12: "By the breath of God frost is given," etc. The idea is, that they are entirely under his control. They obey him when he speaks. ¶ *He causeth his wind to blow.* The warm south wind:—"*his*" wind, because he directs it, and causes it to perform his will. ¶ And *the waters flow.* The snow and the ice melt.

19. *He showeth his word unto Jacob.* Marg., *words.* His commands; his promises; his laws. The things which were before adverted to, pertain to the world in general. All men see his works; all enjoy the benefits of his arrangements in the seasons,—in the changes which occur upon the earth; but he has peculiarly favoured his own people by giving them his laws,—his revealed will. This distinguishes them above all other nations of the earth, and gives them peculiar occasion for gratitude. ¶ *His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.* His laws; his written word. The word *judgments* here refers to the law of God as being that which he *judges* or *determines* to be right.

20. *He hath not dealt so with any nation.* He has favoured Israel more than any other people by giving them his revealed truth. This was so. There was no nation in the ancient world so favoured as the Hebrew people in this respect. There is no nation now so favoured as the nation that has the revealed will of God—the Bible. The possession of that book gives a nation a vast superiority in all respects over all others. In laws, customs, morals, intelligence, social life, purity, charity, prosperity, that book elevates a nation at once, and scatters blessings which can be derived from nothing else. The highest benevolence that could be shown to any nation would be to put it in possession of the word of God in the language of the people. ¶ *And* as for his *judgments, they have not known them.* Other nations are ignorant of his laws, his statutes, his revealed will. They are consequently subjected to all the evils which arise from ignorance of those laws. The fact that the ancient people of God possessed them was a sufficient reason for the Hallelujah with which the psalm closes. The fact that *we* possess them is a sufficient reason why we should re-echo the shout of praise, and cry HALLELUJAH.

PSALM CXLVIII.

The author of this psalm is unknown. The occasion on which it was composed was probably the same as that on which the two previous psalms and the two following were written,—each commencing and closing with a *Hallelujah.* That occasion was, most probably, as before remarked, the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the captivity, and the dedication of the temple.

The psalm is, in general, a call on all parts of the universe to praise the Lord. It is properly divided into two portions. In the first (vers. 1–6), the call is addressed to the heavens—to all that is above the earth—to praise Jehovah; in the second (vers. 7–14), the call is addressed to all the dwellers on the earth to unite in that praise. The psalm is most animated and triumphant. The language accords with the sentiment. It is adapted to the most animating and spirit-stirring music; and these psalms —this and the two preceding and the two following—in style, in sentiment, in poetic beauty, in sublimity, in their adaptedness to fill the soul with lofty emotions—are eminently fitted to close the whole collection,—the entire Book of Psalms. Little can be needed, or can be added, in illustration of the sentiments of the psalm.

PSALM CXLVIII.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise [s] ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens [t] of heavens, and ye waters that *be* above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: [u] for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

[1] *Hallelujah.*

[s] Ps. ciii. 20.

[t] 1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Cor. xii. 2.

[u] Gen. i. 1, etc.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. cxlvi. 1. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD *from the heavens.* On the part of the heavens. Let those who dwell in heaven begin the song. ¶ *Praise him in the heights.* All that are *in* the heights; to wit, in the highest parts of the universe, or the heavens.

2. *Praise ye him, all his angels.* Dwelling in the heavens. Comp. Notes on Ps. ciii. 20. ¶ *Praise ye him, all his hosts.* See Notes on Ps. ciii. 21 and on Isa. i. 9. All his armies,—referring to the angels considered as marshalled into hosts, of which God is the Head and Leader.

3. *Praise ye him, sun and moon.* The most conspicuous and glorious objects in the heavens, as apparent to the eyes of men. ¶ *Praise him, all ye stars of light.* A poetical expression to denote bright or shining stars. The phrase embraces all the stars as they strike the eyes of men. Each one has something peculiar to it for which to praise God: and the entire groups—the immense multitudes, as such—should join in one chorus of praise.

4. *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens.* Referring to the idea that there is one heaven rising above another. See Notes on Ps. lxviii. 33. See 1 Kings viii. 27: "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." Comp. 2 Chron. ii. 6. ¶ *And ye waters that* be *above the heavens.* Gen. i. 7: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." The allusion here is to the waters which seem to be above the *lower* heaven, *i.e.*, the air, and which *seem* to come from some higher region — some higher heaven. See Notes on Ps. civ. 3: "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters."

5. *Let them praise the name of the* LORD. That is, Let them praise Jehovah himself,—the name being often put for the person or thing referred to. ¶ *For he commanded, and they were created.* He showed his great power by merely speaking, and they came at once into being. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 6, 9.

6. *He hath also stablished them for ever and ever.* He has made them firm, stable, enduring. That they *may* be eternal is possible; that they will *not* be, no one can prove. Matter, when created, has no necessary tendency to decay or annihilation; and the universe—the stars, and suns, and systems—which *have* endured so many millions of ages *may* continue to exist any number of millions of ages to come. Of course, however, all this is dependent on the will of God. On the meaning of this passage, comp. Notes on Ps. cxix. 90; lxxii. 5; lxxxix. 2, 36, 37. See also Notes on 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10, 13. ¶ *He hath made a decree which shall not pass.* He has given a law or statute which they cannot pass. The word rendered *decree* here seems to be used in the sense of *limit* or *bound;* and the idea is, that he has bound them by a fixed *law;* he has established laws which they are com-

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, [v] and all deeps:
8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

[v] Isa. xliii. 20.

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and [1] flying fowl:

[1] *birds of wing.*

pelled to observe. The fact is, in regard to them, that he has established great laws — as the law of gravitation—by which they are held from flying off; he has marked out orbits in which they move; he has so bound them that they perform their revolutions with unerring accuracy in the very path which he has prescribed. So accurate are their movements that they can be predicted with exact precision; and so uniform, that any succession of ages does not vary or affect them.

7. *Praise the* LORD *from the earth.* From among those who dwell on the earth. In respect to *terrestrial* objects, let these also unite in the praise of God. ¶ *Ye dragons.* On the meaning of this word, see Notes on Ps. xci. 13; Isa. xiii. 22. The word may mean a great fish, a whale, a sea-monster, or a serpent. It would seem to refer here to whales and sea-monsters. See Notes on Rev. xii. 3. ¶ *And all deeps.* All that are *in* the depths of the sea. Not merely the "dragons" or sea-monsters, but all that inhabit the oceans.

8. *Fire, and hail.* Fire, when accompanied by hail; that is, the lightning. See Ps. xviii. 12. ¶ *Snow, and vapours.* Snow and clouds. It was not unnatural that these should be combined, or suggested together to the mind. ¶ *Stormy wind.* The storm; the tempest. ¶ *Fulfilling his word.* Obeying his command; accomplishing his purpose. Let the storm-wind, which seems to be so little under any control, speak his praise by showing how obedient it is to his will, and how exactly it carries out his designs. Its perfect submission to his laws,—the exactness with which, though apparently so fierce, raging, and lawless, it carries out his plans, and pauses when he commands it,—is in fact an act of praise or homage, as it proclaims his majesty, his supremacy, and his power. On the sentiment here expressed, comp. Notes on Ps. cvii. 29; Ps. lxxxix. 9.

9. *Mountains, and all hills.* As being among the loftiest objects of earth, raising their heads highest towards the heavens. ¶ *Fruitful trees, and all cedars.* Fruitful trees, not as distinguished from those which are barren, but as distinguished from forest-trees, those whose nature is that they do not bear *fruit.* Of the latter, the cedar was the most prominent, and, therefore, is made the representative of the whole.

10. *Beasts, and all cattle.* Wild beasts and tame; those which roam the forest, and those which have been domesticated for the service of man. As fruitful trees and cedars might include *all* the trees, so the "beasts and cattle" here might include the whole of those that were wild and tamed. ¶ *Creeping things, and flying fowl.* Marg., as in Heb., *Birds of wing.* These are grouped together for a reason similar to that for which fruitful trees and cedars, and beasts and cattle, are grouped together, to embrace the whole. The expression embraces the loftiest and lowest; those which ascend farthest above the earth, and those which creep upon its surface. The word rendered *creeping things* would properly embrace the smaller animals which creep along upon the ground; both those which have four feet or more, as mice, lizards, crabs, etc., and those without feet, which glide or drag themselves upon the ground, as worms and serpents. (Gesenius, *Lex.*) These, in their lowly condition, and in their

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for [w] his name alone is [1] excellent; his glory *is* above the earth and heaven.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints, *even* of the children of Israel, a people near [x] unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

[w] Ps. viii. 1; Isa. xii. 4.

[1] *exalted.* [x] Eph. ii. 13, 17.

humble way, are called on to unite in the general chorus of praise. Accomplishing the purpose for which they are made, they will, with the most lofty of created beings, contribute to proclaim the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God.

11. *Kings of the earth, and all people.* This would embrace all, as all are included in the idea of the rulers and the ruled. ¶ *Princes, and all judges of the earth.* Those of exalted rank; those high in authority. This is proper in itself considered, as they are men like other men; and proper as an example to the rest. None of any rank are exempt from the obligation to praise God; none are cut off from the privilege.

12. *Both young men, and maidens.* Those in the morning of life,—just entering on their career; just forming their character:—with ardour, elasticity, cheerfulness, hope;—let them consecrate all this to God:—let all that there is in the buoyancy of their feelings, in the melody of their voices, in their ardour and vigour, be employed in the praise and the service of God. ¶ *Old men, and children.* Old men, with what remains of life, and children, with all that there is of joyousness—let all unite in praising God. Life, as it closes,—life, as it begins,—let it all be devoted to God.

13. *Let them praise the name of the* LORD. Let them praise Jehovah,—the *name* being often put for the *person.* ¶ *For his name alone is excellent.* Marg., as in Heb., *exalted.* He only is exalted as God. See Notes on Ps. viii. 1: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" ¶ *His glory is above the earth and heaven.* Comp. Notes on Ps. cxiii. 4: "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens." See also Notes on Ps. viii. 1: "Who hast set thy glory above the heavens."

14. *He also exalteth the horn of his people.* He gives them power and prosperity. See Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 17: "And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted." Comp. Ps. xcii. 10; cxii. 9. ¶ *The praise of all his saints.* That is, "he has raised up praise for all his saints;" or, has given them occasion for praise. He has so blessed them with special mercies as to make praise peculiarly appropriate for them. ¶ Even *of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.* Whom he admits to his presence as his friends; whom he regards as his own. See Notes on Eph. ii. 13; comp. Notes on Acts ii. 39. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelu-jah. Let all unite in his praise.

PSALM CXLIX.

This belongs to the group of psalms already referred to (cxlvi.–cl.), each beginning and ending with a *Hallelujah*, and probably composed after the return from the captivity, and the rebuilding of the walls of the city and the second temple. This psalm would be eminently appropriate to such an occasion,—first, as expressing the joy of the nation; and secondly, as indicative of what the nation was to do in those circumstances in carrying out the purposes of God, and accomplishing his will. The people are considered as restored to their land; as safe, peaceful, happy; their city is securely fortified, and they are armed to defend themselves, and are now in a position to carry their conquests over the heathen and hostile powers around them. The psalm, therefore, consists of two parts:—

I. The exhortation to praise, to joy,

PSALM CXLIX.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that [v] made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his name [2] in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

[1] *Hallelujah.* [v] Ps. c. 3.

[2] Or, *with the pipe.*

to rejoicing—as appropriate to their deliverance; to their safe return; to their re-establishment in their own land, vers. 1–5.

II. The exhortation to carry out the purposes of God in regard to the people who had wronged them, and who were still hostile to them:—to inflict on them the punishment which was due to them, and which God designed to bring upon them,—regarding themselves as called of God to be his instruments in executing that punishment, in token of the Divine displeasure at the conduct of those who had oppressed and wronged them, vers. 6–9.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. Marg., *Hallelujah.* See Notes on Ps. cxlvi. 1. ¶ *Sing unto the* LORD *a new song.* As if there was a new and a special occasion for praise. This would be so if the psalm was composed on the return from the exile; on the rebuilding of the city; and on the re-dedication of the temple. On the meaning of the language, see Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 3; Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3; see also Ps. xcvi. 1; Isa. xlii. 10. ¶ And *his praise in the congregation of saints.* In the assembly of the people of God. See Notes on Ps. cxlviii. 14; cxi. 1.

2. *Let Israel.* The people of Israel; the Hebrew people; the people of God. ¶ *Rejoice in him that made him.* Him, who has made the people what they are. All that they have and are is to be traced to him, as really as the universe of matter is to be traced to his power. Their condition is not one of *development,* or one which is the result of their own wisdom, grace, or power. See Notes on Ps. c. 3: "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Comp. Isa. liv. 5. ¶ *Let the children of Zion.* Those who dwell in Zion or Jerusalem. ¶ *Be joyful in their King.* In God *as* their king. (*a*) That they *have* a king, or that there *is* one to rule over them; (*b*) That they have *such* a king; one so wise, so powerful, so good; (*c*) That he administers his government with so much efficiency, impartiality, equity, wisdom, goodness. Comp. Ps. c. 3–5.

3. *Let them praise his name in the dance.* Marg., *with the pipe.* The Hebrew word here—מָחוֹל, *Mahhol*—is rendered *dancing* in Ps. xxx. 11; *dance,* as here, Ps. cl. 4 (where also the margin has *pipe*); Jer. xxxi. 13; Lam. v. 15; *dances,* Jer. xxxi. 4. It does not elsewhere occur. On the verb חוּל, *hhool,* see Notes on Ps. x. 5; li. 5. Here it cannot be improper to regard it as referring to that measured tread, or solemn movement which sometimes constituted a part of worship: 2 Sam. vi. 14. Such a movement cannot be *proved* to be wrong in worship; whether it is wise or expedient is a different matter. Customs in worship change as the customs of a people change; and that might be very proper in one stage of society, or in one period of the world, which, though not in itself wrong, might be very unadvisable in another. There was much in the Hebrew mode of worship which cannot be transferred to the forms of Christian worship without an obvious incongruity and disadvantage; and because a thing has been done, and is not in itself wrong, we should not infer that it should always be done, or that it would be always best. If people like the Shakers dance in worship, they have an undoubted right to do so, and it *may* be the most edifying mode of worship for *them* with their

4 For [x] the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their [1] mouth, and a two-edged [y] sword in their hand;

[x] Ps. cxlvii. 11. [1] *throat.* [y] Heb. iv. 12.

low notions of religion; let not others ridicule them; nor let others go to see them as they would any other *outré* performance from idle curiosity. Such absurdities might soon die away if they were not kept alive by the notice which they attract, and by the foolish curiosity of wiser people. There are some things which are more certain to come to an end by *neglect* than they could by sober argument; some things which live merely because they *are* ridiculed, and because they who practise them are exalted into conspicuity by their own folly, and by the idea that they are martyrs. ¶ *Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.* On these instruments, see Notes on Isa. v. 12; Job xxi. 12; Ps. lxviii. 25; lxxxi. 2.

4. *For the* LORD *taketh pleasure in his people.* Let them rejoice on this account. He loves them; he approves their conduct; he bestows his favours upon them. All this should add to their joy, and fill their hearts with gladness. Comp. Notes on Ps. xxxv. 27. The Hebrew word here rendered "taketh pleasure" conveys the idea of complacency, satisfaction, delight. It is the opposite of being pained or offended. God has complacency in his people. He delights in their welfare; he delights in doing them good. ¶ *He will beautify the meek with salvation.* The word here rendered *beautify* means to adorn, to honour, as the sanctuary, Isa. lx. 7 (rendered *glorify*); and it here means that the salvation which God would bestow upon them would be of the nature of an ornament, as if they were clothed with costly or splendid raiment. Comp. Ps. cxxxii. 16. The word *meek* here means humble or lowly, and may refer to those who are humble in rank or condition, or those who are humble in heart. Perhaps the two ideas are here combined. They have not external adorning, but God will give them an honour and beauty in salvation which no outward adorning could impart.

5. *Let the saints be joyful in glory.* In the glory of their condition; in the favour of God; in the honour which he bestows upon them. Let them rejoice in this; let them shout and triumph over this. Other men rejoice in honour; in wealth; in houses, lands, parks, libraries, works of art: let the saints rejoice in the glory of being the friends of God; in the hope of heaven. Comp. Ps. lxxxiv. 11. ¶ *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.* Comp. Notes on Job xxxv. 10; Acts xvi. 25; Ps. xxxiv. 1. The idea is, that in the meditations of the night, when darkness is around them, when alone with God, they may find occasion for exultation and praise. Their hearts may be full of joy, and alone they may give expression to their joy in songs of praise.

6. Let *the high* praises *of God* be *in their mouth.* Marg., as in Heb., *in their throat.* Literally, "Praises of God in their throat; and a sword of two edges in their hand." That is, In the very work of executing the purposes of God on his enemies, there should be the feeling and the language of praise. Their hearts should be full of confidence in God; they should feel that they are engaged in his service; and while they defend themselves, or inflict punishment on the enemies of God, they should chant his praise. The idea is, that even in the work of war they might feel that they were engaged in the service of God, and that the passions usual in war should be subdued and kept under by the consciousness that they

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people;
8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD,

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are mere instruments in the hand of God to accomplish *his* purposes. Perhaps the Hebrew word rendered *high praises*—רוֹמְמוֹת, *romemoth*—may imply more than mere *praise*. It may embrace anything that is lofty and exalted, and *may* mean here that they would have the consciousness that they were engaged in high and lofty aims; that they were carrying out the great designs of God; that they were executing purposes more momentous than their own could be—even the eternal purposes of the Most High. This would give an importance, a dignity, an elevation to their conduct which could spring from no other source. ¶ *And a two-edged sword in their hand.* Literally, *a sword of edges;* that is, a sword with an edge on both sides of the blade. Roman swords were often made in this manner. They were made for piercing as well as for striking. See Notes on Heb. iv. 12.

7. *To execute vengeance upon the heathen.* To inflict punishment upon them as a recompence for their sins. The word *heathen* here means *nations*. The allusion is, doubtless, to those who had oppressed and injured the Hebrew people,—perhaps referring to those who had destroyed the city and the temple at the time of the Babylonish captivity. They were now to receive the punishment due for the wrongs which they had done to the nation; a just recompence at the hand of God, and by the instrumentality of those whom they had wronged. Comp. Notes on Ps. cxxxvii. 7–9. ¶ And *punishments upon the people.* The people of those lands. Those who had waged war with the Hebrew nation.

8. *To bind their kings with chains.* To make them prisoners and captives. This is but carrying out the idea in the previous verses, of inflicting punishment upon them for the wrongs which they had done to the people of God. There is no evidence that this refers to *a spiritual* conquest, or to a *spiritual* subjection of those nations to the true religion. The whole idea is in accordance with what is so often expressed in the Psalms—that of inflicting just punishment on the wicked. See General Introd., § 6. ¶ *And their nobles with fetters of iron.* To make them prisoners. That is, to subdue them. Captives in war, even those of elevated rank, were often led in chains to grace the triumph of conquerors.

9. *To execute upon them the judgment written.* Either, that which is written in the law in general as what is threatened to wicked men; or, that which was written for their particular case, or which they were specifically commanded to do. Comp. Deut. vii. 1, 2; xxxii. 41–43. Most probably the reference is to some particular command in this case. ¶ *This honour have all his saints.* (*a*) It *is* an honour to engage in executing or carrying out the purposes of God. As it is an honour to be a magistrate, a judge, a sheriff, a constable, a commander of an army, an admiral in a navy, to execute the purposes of a government,—an honour *sought* with great avidity among men as among the most valued distinctions of life,—why should it be *less* honourable to execute the purposes of God? Are the objects which he seeks in his administration *less* important than those which are sought among men? Are his laws of *less* importance? Are his aims *less* pure? Is there *less* of justice, and equity, and benevolence in his plans? (*b*) It is an honour which pertains to "*all* the saints"—to *all* who love and fear God—to be engaged in carrying out

PSALM CL.

PRAISE [1] ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

[1] *Hallelujah.*

or executing his plans. In their own way, and in their own sphere—it may, indeed, be a very humble sphere—but each and all *in* their own sphere, are engaged in executing the purposes of God. In the duties of a family; in kindness to the poor; in the office of a teacher or a magistrate; in clearing a farm; in cultivating the land; in building a schoolhouse; in founding a church, a college, an asylum for the blind, the dumb, the lame, the insane; in contributing to send the gospel abroad over our own land, or among the heathen, or *in going to carry that gospel to a benighted world,*—in some of these ways all who are truly the friends of God, or who are entitled to be enrolled among the "saints of the Lord" are, in fact, carrying out the purposes of the Lord—the "judgments written" to guide mankind; and man's highest honour here, as it will be in heaven, is to carry out the purposes of the Lord. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelu-jah. It is a subject of praise and thanksgiving, it should lead us to shout *Hallelujah,* that we are permitted to be employed in any way, however humble, in carrying out the Divine plans, or in accomplishing those great designs which he contemplates toward our race.

PSALM CL.

This beautiful and animated psalm closes the series of the Hallelujah Psalms (cxlvi.–cl.), and appropriately also closes the entire volume. Its author is unknown, but in respect to the object for which it was composed there can be no uncertainty. It was manifestly *designed,* whoever wrote it, to occupy the very place which it does occupy,—to complete the volume devoted to praise. Praise is the suitable ending of the book; praise is what the Spirit of inspiration meant to secure in the heart and on the lips. In the review of the whole there is occasion for praise. In view of all that has been disclosed about God, about his religion, about the manifestations of his mercy and grace to his people, there is occasion for praise. After all that has been experienced, observed, and recorded in this book—all of trial, sorrow, temptation, conflict, disappointment, sickness, bereavement, persecution, war, captivity, bondage, exile, tears, pain, darkness, trouble—there is, as the result of the whole, as there will be at the end of our own troubled and chequered lives, occasion for exultation, praise, triumph,—songs, rejoicings, raptures, hallelujahs. This psalm, then, made up wholly of expressions of gratitude and praise, is an appropriate close to the entire Book of Psalms. So may our lives close, when its varied scenes are over, with thanksgivings and praises, as a proper expression in view of the past, and as emblematic of the uninterrupted employment that awaits us in the heavens.

1. *Praise ye the* LORD. See Notes on Ps. cxlvi. 1. ¶ *Praise God in his sanctuary.* His holy place; the place where he dwells. The allusion here is, probably, to the temple, the place of his abode on earth. ¶ *Praise him in the firmament of his power.* The whole expression is equivalent to earth and heaven;—Praise him on earth; praise him in heaven. The word rendered *firmament* is the same which is used in Gen. i. 6. It properly means an expanse—a thing spread out. The verb from which the word is derived means to beat; then, to beat out,—that is, to spread out by beating, as gold is; and then, simply to *spread out,* to expand. Comp. Ps. cxxxvi. 6; Isa. xlii. 5; xliv. 24. In Syriac the word means to make firm; but this idea is not necessarily in the Hebrew word. The idea of a *firmament* as something *firm* is derived from the Septuagint,—in Gen. i. 6, στερέωμα—in this place, ἐν στερεώματι. The Hebrew, however, merely means an expanse—something spread out, as the heavens *seem* to us to be "stretched out;" and the call here is on all that

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the sound [z] of the [1] trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and [2] dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

[z] Dan. iii. 5, etc. [1] Or, *cornet*, Ps. xcviii. 6.

[2] Or, *pipe*, Ps. cxlix. 3.

dwell *above* that expanse—in heaven—to unite with those on earth in his praise. It is called "the expanse *of his power*" because it is in the heavens—in the sun, the moon, the stars—that the *power* of God seems to be principally displayed.

2. *Praise him for his mighty acts.* See Notes on Ps. cxlv. 4: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy *mighty acts*." The Hebrew word is the same. The reference is to that which displays the *power* of God; the things which manifest his omnipotence. ¶ *Praise him according to his excellent greatness.* Heb., the *multitude* of his greatness. Let the praise in elevation *correspond* with this; let it be such as shall properly *express* this; let all be employed that will contribute to make this known, or that will be appropriate to this. Hence the psalmist proceeds to call on all to make use of everything, by instrument and voice, that would in any manner set forth the praise of God.

3. *Praise him with the sound of the trumpet.* Marg., *cornet.* In this verse and the verses following there is an allusion to the instruments of music which were commonly employed in Hebrew worship. The idea is, that *all* these—all that could properly express praise—*should* be used to celebrate the praises of God. Each one, with its own distinct note, and all combined in harmony, should be employed for this purpose. Most of these instruments, and many more, are now *combined* in the organ, where the instruments, instead of being played on by separate performers, are so united that they can be supplied with wind from one source—the bellows—and all played by one performer. Thus one mind directs the performance, securing, if skilfully done, *perfect* unity and harmony. This instrument was unknown to the Hebrews. Among them, each instrument had its own performer. The *trumpet* was principally used to call the people together, but it was also an important instrument among those used by the bands of musicians that performed in the temple, as its tones are now important ones in the organ. ¶ *Praise him with the psaltery and harp.* Heb., the *nebel* and *kinnor.* See these instruments described in the Notes on Isa. v. 12. The word here rendered *psaltery* is there rendered *viol*,—"And the *harp* and the *viol*," etc.

4. *Praise him with the timbrel.* Heb., *toph.* See this described in the Notes on Isa. v. 12. It is rendered *tabret* and *tabrets* in Gen. xxxi. 27; 1 Sam. x. 5; xviii. 6; Isa. v. 12; xxiv. 8; xxx. 32: Jer. xxxi. 4; Ezek. xxviii. 13; *timbrel* and *timbrels* in Ex. xv. 20; Judges xi. 34; 2 Sam. vi. 5; 1 Chron. xiii. 8; Job xxi. 12; Ps. lxxxi. 2; cxlix. 3; and in the margin in Jer. xxxi. 4. The word does not occur elsewhere. It was an instrument that was struck with the hands. ¶ *And dance.* See this word explained in the Notes on Ps. cxlix. 3. Dancing among the Hebrews seems to have accompanied the timbrel or tabret. See Ex. xv. 20. ¶ *Praise him with stringed instruments.* מְנִנִּים *minnim.* This word means *strings*, from a verb which means to divide; and the proper reference would be to *slender threads*, as if they were *divided*, or made small. It is nowhere else applied to instruments of music, but might be properly applied to a harp, a violin, a bass-viol, etc. The word *strings* is indeed applied elsewhere to instruments of music (Ps. xxxiii. 2; cxliv. 9; 1 Sam. xviii.

5 Praise him upon the loud [a] cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals.

[a] 1 Chron. xv. 16, etc.

6 Let [b] every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

[b] Rev. v. 13.

16; Isa. xxxviii. 20; Hab. iii. 19), but the Hebrew word is different. Such instruments were commonly used in the praise of God. See Notes on Ps. xxxiii. 2. ¶ *And organs.* Heb., *uggab.* See this word explained in the Notes on Job xxi. 12. It occurs elsewhere only in Gen. iv. 21; Job xxi. 12; xxx. 31;—in all of which places it is rendered *organ.* The word is derived from a verb meaning to breathe, to blow; and would be applicable to *any* wind-instrument. It here represents the whole class of wind-instruments. The word *organ* is a Greek word, and is found in the Septuagint in this place; and hence our word *organ* has been introduced into the translation. The Greek word properly denotes (*a*) something by which work is accomplished, as a machine; (*b*) a musical instrument; (*c*) the material from which anything is made; (*d*) the work itself. (*Passow.* Lex.). Our word organ, as used in music, suggests the idea of a *combination* of instruments or sounds. That idea is not found in the Hebrew word. It denotes merely a wind-instrument. Neither the Hebrews nor any of the ancient nations had an instrument that corresponded with the *organ* as we now use the term.

5. *Praise him upon the loud cymbals.* Literally, "the cymbals of sound" or hearing. That is, Let there be audibly expressed joy. The allusion here is to an instrument of music that was most distinctly *heard* in union with other instruments. The sound of the cymbal would be most clearly audible in its accompaniment of the other instruments referred to,—as the sound of cymbals, or as the "triangle" would be now. The Hebrew word rendered *cymbal* means *a tinkling, clanging, ringing,* as of metal, or of arms; then, a whirring, as of wings (comp. Notes on Isa. xviii. 1); then, any tinkling or clanging instrument, as a fish-spear or harpoon; then, cymbals, instruments of music. The cymbal, as now used, is an instrument of brass, in a circular form, like a dish, producing, when two are struck gether, a sharp, ringing sound.—*Webster.* An instrument of this kind is evidently referred to here. The word occurs in the Bible in the following places only:—Deut. xxviii. 42, rendered *locust;* 2 Sam. vi. 5, rendered, as here, *cymbal;* Job xli. 7, rendered *fish-spears;* and Isa. xviii. 1, rendered *shadowing with.* ¶ *Praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals.* The cymbals of joyful voice. On the word *teruah,* rendered *high,* see Notes on Ps. lxxxix. 16. A loud, lofty sound or shout, as on the reception of a conqueror, is the idea here; and the sense is, that the praise of God was to be celebrated with that which would in the highest sense express joy and triumph.

6. *Let everything that hath breath praise the* LORD. All living things in the air, the earth, the waters. Let there be one universal burst of praise. Let his praises be celebrated not only with instruments of music, but let all living beings unite in that praise; let a breathing universe combine in one solemn service of praise. ¶ *Praise ye the* LORD. Hallelu-jah. Thus, at the end of all the trials, the conflicts, the persecutions, the sorrows, the joys recorded in this book, the psalmist gives utterance to feelings of joy, triumph, transport, rejoicing; and thus at the end of all,—when the affairs of this world shall be closed,—when the church shall have passed through all its trials, shall have borne all its persecutions, shall have suffered all that it is appointed to suffer,—when the work of redemption shall be complete, and all the ransomed of the Lord shall have been recovered from sin, and

shall be saved, — that church, all heaven, the whole universe, shall break forth in one loud, long, triumphant Hallelujah. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," Isa. xxxv. 10.

Here I close my exposition of this Book, and with it all that I purpose or expect to prepare in attempting to furnish a commentary on the Holy Scriptures. The volumes which I have prepared have occupied me daily, almost without intermission, for nearly forty years of my life; and now, at sixty-eight years of age, and with the diminished power of vision with which it has pleased God to afflict me, I can hope to attempt no more. More than a generation has passed away while I have been engaged in these labours; and the finishing of this work, and the reason why I cannot hope to do more, admonish me that I am soon to follow that generation to the grave, and that all my work must soon be ended.

A man who has written so much may be pardoned, perhaps, for this personal reflection at the end of so long a journey, and in view of the thought that his labour of life, in this respect, *is ended*. It has been remarked that "the close of a literary undertaking is always contemplated as an event of great interest to the feelings of an author. It is the termination of his labours, and the commencement of his hopes and fears."* Mr. Gibbon has thought proper to record the precise day and hour in which he concluded his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." "I have presumed," he says, "to mark the moment of conception:—I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatever might be the future date of my history, the life of the historian might be short and precarious."†

Nor is Pope's reflection less affecting. "The morning after my exit," he says, "the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers smell as sweet, the plants spring as green, the world will proceed in its old course, and people laugh and marry as they were used to do."

I may not compare myself with these men; but I am conscious of similar emotions, as I bring to a close this long series of works, designed to illustrate the Bible. God has blessed me in this work far above all that I had any reason to anticipate; and while I have cause to believe that he has made it useful in some measure to the world, and venture to hope that he *will* make it useful when the fingers which now move this pen shall be stiff in the grave, he has made it, during nearly forty years, a source of constant blessing to my own soul. In the review of this part of my life I can now conceive of no way possible in which I could have more profitably spent the early hours of each day

* *Life of Cowper*, vol. iii. London, 1835.

† *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. i., p. 170. Dublin, 1796.

than in the study of the Bible. That it has required some sacrifice to do it, —that it has demanded some resoluteness of purpose and steadiness of aim,—that it has required some discipline of mind to keep me firm to the purpose, is indeed true; but the very discipline—the necessity of carrying out a fixed purpose—has been useful to me, and apart from any other results would in itself have been worth all which it has cost me.

I cannot close this work without emotion. I cannot lay down my pen at the end of this long task without feeling that with me the work of life is nearly over. Yet I could close it at no better place than in finishing the exposition of *this* book; and the language with which the Book of Psalms itself closes seems to me to be eminently appropriate to all that I have experienced. All that is past,—all in the prospect of what is to come,—calls for a long, a joyful, a triumphant HALLELUJAH.

APPENDIX

PSALM XC.

The Fourth Book of Psalms. The Fourth Book of the Psalter numbers, like the Third Book, seventeen psalms. It comprises, along with the psalm of Moses, those of the last hundred years of the Jewish monarchy, up to the date of the Babylonish captivity. At what time they were collected and arranged in their present order there is no certain evidence to show; perhaps not till the days of Nehemiah, when the Fifth Book of the Psalter was also arranged, and the canon of Old Testament Scripture closed. Of the psalms composing the Fourth Book, Ps. xc. is entitled "A Prayer of Moses the Man of God;" Ps. ci. ciii. bear the name of David; Ps. cii. is "A Prayer of the Afflicted," &c. In the superscriptions of the rest there is no indication of the authorship; they are probably the productions of the sons of Asaph, who formed during this period the only surviving temple-choir.

These psalms do not reflect, to the same extent as those of Book III., the political events and vicissitudes of their period. They were all written (excepting, of course, the prayer of Moses) after the irrevocable doom of destruction upon Jerusalem for the wickedness of Manasseh had been solemnly pronounced. In consequence of that doom, the expected full redemption of Israel and the glorification of the sovereignty of the house of David in the person of the promised Messiah were in the eyes of the people indefinitely deferred; and the continuity of progress to the future of glory being thus destroyed, the immediate political events of the times lost in great measure their prospective interest. Whatever impatient hopes the events of the reign of Hezekiah had served to nurture of a speedy fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, must have yielded with many to the recklessness of despair and indifference; but meanwhile the faith of the true servants of God was being disciplined, and their expectations spiritualized. Deeply prophetical as are many of the psalms on which we now enter, the result of the dissociation of the anticipations of the future from the contemplations of the present is that they depict the events of the future rather in their divine than in their human aspect; they speak not so much of the truth which should spring out of the earth as of the righteousness which should look down from heaven. These psalms have a freshness of their own; not the freshness of national youth, nor that of national rejuvenescence; but rather the freshness which will ever spring from solid depth of faith. They are the utterance of the traveller who, finding but little of interest in the long weary plain that extends around him, rejoices nevertheless in gazing on the glories of the distant hills; and, in the assurance that he will not fail to reach them in the end, contentedly plods on along his level road, aware that the journey, however dull, is necessary, and trusting that in the Lord even his present labours will not have been in vain.—*Thrupp.*

There is a very general concurrence in ascribing the ninetieth Psalm to Moses. The accuracy of the superscription is admitted by all the ancient versions, by Luther, Calvin, Fabricius, &c., by Tholuck, Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, Alexander, and Binnie, and by modern commentators generally. Even those who range themselves on the other side, such as Hupfeld and Ewald, seem to speak doubtfully, and admit that the internal evidence is of the strongest possible kind. We give one or two passages from distinguished writers on the side of the ascription to Moses:—

"There are important *internal* reasons

which may be urged in favour of the composition of the psalm by Moses, as announced in the title. The poem bears throughout the character of high antiquity; there is no other psalm which so decidedly conveys the impression of being the original expression of the feelings to which it gives utterance. There is, moreover, no other psalm which stands so much *by itself*, in regard to its fundamental tone and peculiarities, for which parallel passages furnish so little kindred matter in characteristic peculiarities. On the other hand, there occurs a series of striking allusions to the Pentateuch, especially to the poetical passages, and, above all others, to Deut. xxxii. (compare the exposition), allusions which are of another kind than those which occur in other passages in the Psalms, and which do not bear like them the character of *borrowing*. Luther, in the following quotation, intimates that even here the deep seriousness of the lawgiver may be seen: 'Just as Moses acts in teaching the law, so does he in this prayer. For he preaches death, sin, and condemnation, in order that he may alarm the proud who are secure in their sins, and that he may set before their eye their sin and evil, concealing, hiding nothing.' The strong prominence given to the doctrine of *death as the wages of sin* is especially characteristic, a doctrine which is not of frequent occurrence in Scripture, and especially not so in the Psalms, and which is proclaimed as distinctly and impressively as it is here only in the Pentateuch, Gen. ii. and iii., and in those ordinances of the ceremonial law which threaten death.

"The reasons which have been adduced *against* the composition of the psalm by Moses are of very little weight. The objection that ver. 10, where the length of human life is limited to seventy, or, at the most, eighty years, stands opposed to Deut. xxxiv. 7, according to which Moses reached the age of 120, is disposed of by the remark, that Moses, throughout the whole psalm, does not speak in *his own name*, but in that of *the people*. It is obvious from Deut. xiv. 22, 23, that among the Israelites at that time the exceptions to the general rule, as to the duration of human life, were much fewer than at ordinary times. Koester's assertion that ver. 15 supposes a long period of suffering, and scarcely applies to the Israelites in the wilderness, who rather beheld the glorious deeds of Jehovah, is disposed of as soon as we direct our attention to 'that terrible oath which God had flashed down upon them in Num. xiv.' Eight-and-thirty years spent amidst the gradual destruction of men lying under the curse, were well fitted to call forth the prayer, 'Make us glad according to the days in which thou hast afflicted us, the years during which we have seen evil;' they are sufficient to explain 'the melancholy view of life' which here meets us, and the dread earnestness 'with which he instructs us of our melancholy necessities:' no glass was more suitable than this for giving a view of the common condition of human life. Finally, the assertion that the psalm could not have been composed by Moses, because it resembles the other psalms in language and general poetical structure, is an *a priori* assertion, which may be met with at least as much force by another, that Moses, 'the fountain out of which all the prophets have drunk divine wisdom,' gave at first the tone no less for prophecy, Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii., than for psalm poetry."—*Hengstenberg.*

"Viewed with reference to its author, this psalm is the utterance of the feelings of the great prophet and lawgiver of Israel during his pilgrimage through the wilderness. It was probably written towards the end of the forty years' wanderings (see ver. 15); but its solemnity makes it more likely that it was the result of the long and habitual contemplations of Moses during those wanderings, than that it was occasioned by any single incident. The leading thought of the psalm is that to which vent is given in the first verse; that God is the eternal abiding-place of his people. This thought is first expanded in ver. 2. 'There is indeed,'—so runs the current of the prophet's meditation,—'an earth, which some might deem their home, and which, with all its ancient hills, might verily be called permanent as compared with the short-lived beings that inhabit it; for across its fields have flitted the living bodies, and beneath its soil have rested the bones of successive generations of men, who, from the swiftness with which they passed away, knew nothing of each other, though the earth meanwhile remained the same, and experienced no sensible change. Yet even this earth is itself but the thing of a day in com-

parison of Him whose infinity of existence no language can express, and who from everlasting to everlasting is God: it is therefore in the Creator, rather than in the creature, that we recognize our true abiding-place.' In order further to illustrate the everlastingness and power of God, they are contrasted in ver. 3–6 with the transitoriness of man; as also, in ver. 7–11, with his misery, the result of the divine wrath upon his sin. Ver. 12, which stands in connection with the preceding, contains a short petition that by the contemplation of his own impotence man may acquire a heart of wisdom, so as to learn that God is his abiding-place indeed."—*Thrupp.*

"This psalm is one of the oldest of the inspired utterances. It is the prayer which is read over the mortal dust of some hundreds of the children of men every week in London alone. And so used, none of us finds it antiquated. The lapse of 3000 years has not made it necessary to discard this clause and that. Words that described the relation of the children of Israel to the eternal God, serve still to express the devotion of English hearts turning to God in their sorrow. As these grand words are uttered, the curtain that hangs round our life seems to draw back, and we see beyond depths that we dreamed not of. From time and the slow succession of events, from the minutes and the hours that seem so long and so many, we turn to God, whose eternal nature was as it now is even when the world was formed, and to whom a thousand years are no more than the middle watch of the night is to a sound sleeper. Nations that seem established for ever are carried off down the roaring cataract of time; men full of pride, and glory, and power, grow and perish like grass; and God alone remains unchangeable, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Archbishop of York's sermons in *Perowne.*

"Three thousand years and more have passed away since the congregation of Israel made the solitudes of the wilderness vocal with the plaintive music of this ninetieth psalm. There is probably not another song now sung in any nation under heaven that possesses such a hoary antiquity. And yet there is about it the freshness of a perpetual youth. In what nation have God's people ceased to employ it? It forms part of the English Order for the Burial of the Dead, and in all Christian nations is in one form or another devoted to a similar use. Moreover, as each new year comes round, bringing its train of saddening memories and summoning us to count our days, who does not turn to the prayer of Moses for the most adequate expression of the thoughts and feelings awakened by the season? In the Protestant churches of Hungary it is sung every New Year's-Day, and the same custom is widely prevalent in other countries. It is a solemnizing and stimulating thought, that when we lift up our voices to the Eternal in this psalm, we put ourselves into communion with the church of all generations and of every nation, we yield our hearts to the guidance of a song given three-and-thirty centuries ago by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and which has been a fountain of pensive comfort to God's saints in all the hundred generations that have lived and died since its notes first awoke the echoes of the desert."—*Binnie.*

11. *Who knows the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* The English version is obscure. The common interpretation is that God's wrath is as terrible as any man apprehends it to be; that those fears of the Deity are not vain bugbears, but are most just, and are vindicated by the terrible effects of the Divine wrath upon mankind. Or, God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful and serious people have of it. So Pool and Henry. The real meaning of the words seems to us best brought out, and the connection with the general subject of the psalm best maintained, by the translation of Hengstenberg, Alexander, and others, which unites the two clauses of the text; and makes of both one interrogation implying the strongest possible negation—"Who knows the power of thine anger, and according to thy fear, thy wrath?" According to thy fear then has the sense "as true piety or reverence for God demands." No one has a just sense of the Divine wrath, or knows and feels it as it ought to be known and felt. We give the following from Hengstenberg, who quotes Luther largely:—

On ver. 11, Luther: "From this point he shows why and for whose sake he had given this narrative; for the sake, namely, of unfeeling sinners, in order that they may be brought to a sense of

their misery. For this is the greatest misery that we men live in such great manifold innumerable distresses, have such a short life, and are in perpetual danger, yea, certain prospect of eternal death, and yet do not feel all this, nor know it sufficiently. Who can sufficiently express such stupidity!" The expression, "who knows the power of thy wrath," equivalent to "thy wrath as it is made known in the brevity of our existence, the power of death in all its strength," is in the first instance an expression of painful *lamentation* over the inconceivable blindness of men; it however contains within it the heart-felt wish that it may be otherwise, and the *prayer* that God would alter it, which in ver. 12 rises out of the lamentation. The יודע there refers manifestly to the יודע here. Luther: "This complaint also contains a prayer in it. For Moses wishes that such pestilential security may be torn out of his heart, and out of the hearts of all men, and that all hearts may be animated by faith, so that men may believe that such a thing is true, and may be alarmed at such great wrath of God." "As thy fear" is to be understood as equivalent to "in proportion as is demanded by that fear of thee, that piety which is becoming in thy people." Several explain after the example of Venema: according to thy dreadfulness, according to the infinite measure of which in God, are his wrath against sin, and his punishment of sin. But "the fear of God" is a phrase of constant occurrence in the sense of "fear *before* God" (compare Deut. ii. 25; Ps. v. 7), and, on the other hand, there is only one passage which can be referred to in the sense of dreadfulness—viz. Eze. i. 18, a writer who supplies so many anomalous expressions, and even in this one passage, the above sense depends upon a false exposition, compare Gesen. *Thes.*—For what object the psalmist, in ver. 12, wishes his days to be numbered, appears from the reference of the יודע to the יודע of the preceding verse, according to which, to number the days, and to know the wrath of God must be strictly connected together. May God, the sense is, lead us to lay rightly to heart the brevity of our life, thus cause us to know the greatness of his wrath, the depth of our corruption, and in this way lead us to repentance. Luther: "Such a thing would never have come into my mind as to pray for this, if I had not seen that Moses prayed here for it with all earnestness and valour. For I thought that the hearts of all men were as full of fear and terror as mine is. But if we carefully examine we shall find there are scarcely ten in ten thousand moved by these things as they ought to be; all the others live as if there were no God and no death. This is the greatest misery, and the one to be most deeply deplored, that men even in death dream of life. There are certainly to be found some men of experience who feel this misery very severely without any such prayer, but the greater part do not feel it; for these generally live in such a way that they value their moment of life as if it were an eternal existence." —*Hengstenberg.*

12. *So teach us to number our days*, &c. The serious consideration of our lives' frailty and shortness will confer to our right valuation (or esteem) of things, and consequently to our well-placing, and our duly moderating our cares, affections, and endeavours about them. . . . To begin with that which takes the chief place, which the world most dotes on, which seems most great and eminent among men; secular state and grandeur, might and prowess, honour and reputation, favour and applause of men, all the objects of human pride and ambition: of this kind St. Peter thus pronounces, *All the glory of men is as the flower of the grass; the grass is dried up, and the flower thereof doth fall off;* it is as the flower of the grass, how specious soever, yet the most fading and failing part thereof; the grass itself will soon wither, and the flower doth commonly fall off before that. We cannot hold this flower of worldly glory beyond our short time of life; and we may easily much sooner be deprived of it: many tempests of fortune may beat it down, many violent hands may crop it; it is apt of itself to fade upon the stalk; however the sun (the influence of age and time) will assuredly burn and dry it up, with our life that upholds it. . . . Perhaps, could it, without much care, trouble, and hazard, continue for ever, or for a long time, it might be thought somewhat considerable: but since its duration is uncertain and short; since *man in honour abideth not, but is like the beasts that perish;* that they who look so *like gods*, and are called so, and are worshipped as such, *yet must die like men*, like men, yea *like sheep shall be laid in the grave;* since,

as it is said of the king of Babylon in Isaiah, *their pomp must be brought down to the grave;* seeing that a moment of time shall extinguish all their lustre, and still all that tumult about them; that they must be disrobed of their purple, and be clothed with corruption; and that their so spacious and splendid palaces must soon be exchanged for close darksome coffins; that both their own breath and the breath of them who now applaud them, must be stopped; that they who now bow to them, may presently trample on them; and they who to-day trembled at their presence may the morrow scornfully insult their memory. *Is this the man* (will they say, as they did of that great king) *who made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the kingdoms thereof?* Since this is the fate of the greatest and most glorious among men, what reason can there be to admire their condition, to prize such vain and short-lived pre-eminences? For who can account it a great happiness to be styled and respected as a prince, to enjoy all the powers and prerogatives of highest dignity for a day or two; then being obliged to descend into a sordid and despicable estate? Who values the fortune of him that is brought forth upon the stage to act the part of a prince; though he be attired there, and attended as such, hath all the garb and ceremony, the ensigns and appurtenances of majesty about him, speaks and behaves himself imperiously, is flattered and worshipped accordingly; yet who in his heart doth adore this idol, doth admire this mockery of greatness? Why not? Because, after an hour or two the play is over, and this man's reign is done. And what great difference is there between this and the greatest worldly state? Between Alexander in the history and Alexander on the stage? Are not (in the psalmist's account) *all our years spent as a tale that is told?*—Barrow, *Sermons.*

PSALMS XCI.—C.

General remarks on this decade of Psalms. The eve of the captivity was blessed with psalms which take rank amongst the brightest and the most joyous the church ever sang. As the coming on of night brings into view the far-off starry worlds, so God made choice of the age when the temporal glories of David's house were sinking into darkness, for disclosing to the faith of the godly the higher glories he had in store for that house and for his people. . . . The decline of the temporal grandeur of the nation was fitted, as it was no doubt intended, to wean God's people from that transitory glory, and to prepare them for listening to predictions respecting a more excellent. It was at this epoch, accordingly, that the divine purposes regarding the church and the world, in the latter days, began to be fully opened up by the prophets, and especially by Isaiah. Assuming that the predicted captivity would certainly come to pass, they spoke of a happy return to Zion; and with their announcement of that return were mingled intimations regarding the advent of the Messiah, his sufferings and consequent glory, the mission of the Comforter, the calling of the Gentiles, the establishment of the kingdom of God in all the earth. Occasionally, as in Is. xii., the predictions of the prophets blossom into song. It would have been strange if, at such a time, the stock of psalmody in actual use had not been enriched with an increment of new psalms,—anthems in which the church might express her faith in the disclosures God had made, and the gladness with which they filled her heart.

Every devout reader will remember psalms of the character anticipated. The middle of the Psalter derives a peculiar brightness from a constellation of them; the decade, I mean, which closes with Ps. c. With perhaps one or two exceptions, all the ten, from Ps. xci.–c., belong to the prophetic order. They are Messianic in the sense of celebrating the kingdom of Christ, although not Messianic in the narrower sense of celebrating his person. They soar above the level of the Old Testament economy, several of them carrying the soul forward and upward to a state of things such as the apostolical church itself never saw. Dr. Delitzsch has, with much felicity, entitled them *apocalyptic psalms:* some of them I should prefer to call the *Songs of the Millennium.* Ps. c., for instance, how grandly does it anticipate the millennial time, and summon all the nations to unite in the high praises of the Lord! . . . The Ninety-third is another star in this constellation. The drift of it cannot be better expressed than in the two words with which it opens, JEHOVAH REIGNETH. It is a kind of proclamation

in which God's people are invited to declare before men and angels that the Lord is King, He and He only. It is the response of the church to the preaching of the gospel, so rapturously hailed in Isaiah—the preaching of the message "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."—*Binnie.*

PSALM XCI.

There are no marks of date in the psalm. The author and the occasion are alike unknown. Hengstenberg remarks as follows:—"Several expositors have incorrectly assumed the occasion to have been a destructive *disease.* How God affords protection at such an emergency is indeed brought prominently forward in ver. 6, and perhaps with the design that the church should use this psalm, among other occasions, also in a season of pestilence, as it has done at all times: among all the psalms, no one is more suitable for this purpose. But this reference, so far from being the exclusive, is not even once the preponderating one, which it would have been had the psalm been called forth by such an occasion. According to a correct exposition, it occurs only in the verse above referred to. And even here it is oppression arising from enemies that occupies the foreground, as is usually the case in the psalm, among the dangers against which the protection of God is sufficient.

"The alternation of *thou* and *I* in the psalm has led many expositors to divide it among alternating choruses. But that this is not the case is clear from the fact that in this way we are obliged to tear asunder what is manifestly connected together; thus, in the introduction, where the first portion in the first verse must belong to the first chorus, and the second in the second verse to the second chorus; next in ver. 9, where the change occurs in one and the same verse, and where the first portion allotted to a particular chorus is remarkably distinguished for its being far too short and bald. The fact, however, upon which this hypothesis leans may be far more easily explained by supposing that the psalmist speaks at one time from his own person to the soul of the righteous one who is in danger, and revives its courage, while at another time he expresses confidence from the soul of the righteous man; and thus in that pleasant alternation which forms the characteristic peculiarity of the psalm, he employs at one time the *thou* in the character of *teacher*, and at another time the *I* in the character of *scholar.* If we take a right view of the *I* throughout the psalm, keeping our attention not so much upon the person of the psalmist, as upon those who were intended to appropriate the psalm to themselves, the difference between the *thou* and the *I* will be felt as less marked, and will occasion scarcely any difficulty. Under the *thou* an *I* is everywhere concealed; for the psalmist teaches what the person for whose use the psalm was designed ought to acknowledge: and, in like manner, under the *I* there is a *thou;* for the person using the psalm adopts language put into his mouth by the psalmist, who is only a *thou* in disguise. The call of instruction in Scripture (this is the meaning of the alternation) ought always to be responded to by the acknowledgment of the hearer."

5, 6. *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,* &c. "Here is, first," says Henry, "great danger supposed, the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are apt to be timorous will, in neither period, think themselves safe. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, beside those things that are creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all; we read of *fear in the night,* Can. iii. 8. There is also a *pestilence that walketh in darkness,* as that was which slew the first-born of the Egyptians and the army of the Assyrians. No locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them. But surely in the daytime, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an *arrow that flieth by day* too, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high noon, when we are awake and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the daytime that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But, secondly, here is great

security promised to believers in the midst of this danger, '*Thou shalt not be afraid*, God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting, distrustful fear (that fear which hath torment), in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that, though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection.' A believer *needs not* fear, and therefore *should not* fear, any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out; *O death, where is thy sting?* It is also under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that."

11. *He shall give his angels charge over thee.* This is added by the psalmist expressly with the view of obviating any fears which might arise from our infirmity; so that we cannot fail to be struck with the benignant condescension of God in thus not only forgiving our diffidence, but proposing the means by which it may be best removed. Does he exhibit himself to us as a fortress and shield, proffer the shadow of his protection, make himself known to us as a habitation in which we may abide, and stretch out his wings for our defence? Surely we are chargeable with the worst ingratitude if we are not satisfied with promises so abundantly full and satisfactory. If we tremble to think of his majesty, he presents himself to us under the lowly figure of the hen: if we are terrified at the power of our enemies, and the multitude of dangers by which we are beset, he reminds us of his own invincible power, which extinguishes every opposing force. When even all these attempts to encourage us have been tried, and he finds that we still linger and hesitate to approach him, or cast ourselves upon his sole and exclusive protection, he next makes mention of the angels and proffers them as guardians of our safety. As an additional illustration of his indulgent mercy and compassion for our weakness, he represents those whom he has ready for our defence as being a numerous host; he does not assign one solitary angel to each saint, but commissions the whole armies of heaven to keep watch over every individual believer. It is the individual believer whom the psalmist addresses, as we read also Ps. xxxiv. 7, that "angels encamp round about them that fear him." We may learn from this that there is no truth in the idea that each saint has his own peculiar guardian angel; and it is of no little consequence to consider that as our enemies are numerous, so also are the friends to whom our defence is intrusted. It were something no doubt to know that even one angel was set over us with this commission, but it adds weight to the promise when we are informed that the charge of our safety is committed to a numerous host, as Elisha was enabled, by a like consideration, to despise the great army of adversaries which was arrayed against him (2 Ki. vi. 16). Nor is this inconsistent with the passages of Scripture which seem to speak as if a distinct angel were assigned to each individual. It is evident that God employs his angels in different ways, setting one angel over several whole nations, and again several angels over one man. There is no necessity that we should be nice and scrupulous in inquiring into the exact manner in which they minister together for our safety; it is enough that, knowing from the authority of an apostle the fact of their being appointed ministers to us, we should rest satisfied of their being always intent upon their commission. We read elsewhere of their readiness to obey and execute the commands of God; and this must go to strengthen our faith, since their exertions are made use of by God for our defence.

The psalmist, in the passage now before us, speaks of the members of the church generally; and yet the devil did not wrest the words when, in his temptation in the wilderness, he applied them particularly to Christ. It is true that he is constantly seeking to pervert and corrupt the truth of God; but, so far as general principles are concerned, he can put a specious gloss upon things, and is a sufficiently acute theologian. It is to be considered that when our whole human family were banished from the divine favour, we ceased to have anything in common with the angels, and they to have any communication with us. It was Christ, and he only, who, by removing the ground of sepa-

ration, reconciled the angels to us; this being his proper office, as the apostle observes (Eph. i. 10), to gather together in one what had been dispersed both in heaven and on earth. This was represented to the holy patriarch Jacob under the figure of a ladder (Gen. xxviii. 12); and, in allusion to our being united into one collective body with the angels, Christ said, "Afterwards ye shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending."—*Calvin.*

6. *A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this.* Comp. Ps. lxxiii. 22. Were God's thoughts less deep and glorious, did he repay the wicked at every particular transgression immediately with his punishment, and did he bestow salvation immediately upon the righteous according to the canon which Job's friends with their limited views lay down, the government of the world would become plain even to the dark eye of ungodliness. But its depth makes it a *secret*, the understanding of which very often in times of conflict is withheld even from the pious, as is manifest from the example of Job and the author of Ps. lxxiii., and in which there is always much that may be learned. He who has got a deep insight into this secret, and has seen that the conduct of God towards *his people* is always and only *grace*, even though often under the deepest covering; and that his conduct towards the wicked is always only *wrath*, even when they flourish and blossom, he alone can cry out, "O the depth of the riches," &c., and to him *these* works of God appear greater and more glorious still than the works of creation. On ver. 7 comp. Ps. xxxvii. 38. The *annihilation* of the wicked comes into notice here as the basis of the *deliverance of the righteous*, which is the proper theme of the psalm. Arnd: "Nothing, except it be of God, can stand, whether it be skill, or riches, or honour, or power. It rises and flourishes to appearance, but in the end it is only a thistle bush and a noxious weed, good for nothing but the fire."—*Hengstenberg.*

12. *He shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow up like a cedar in Lebanon.* Of the wicked he had just said before, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny of grass—in a warm country too—are the palm-tree, and the cedar in Lebanon! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely they grow! How strong and lofty is the cedar! How upright, and majestic, and tall the palm-tree—the palm also bears fruit, called dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundredweight at once.—*Jay.*

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine, well-watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the Word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." They that wait upon the Lord renew their strength. Hence, from their own experience, as well as from the word of promise, they are increasingly induced to say with David, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."—*Jay.*

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. This is to show the permanency of their principles, and to distinguish them from natural productions—

> "The plants of grace shall ever live;
> Nature decays, but grace must thrive:
> Time, that doth all things else impair,
> Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The believer does not escape all the effects of years. The eye may grow dim; the ear become dull of hearing. But as the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day. The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring; the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see—more meekness of wisdom—more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace—more maturity of judgment in divine things—more confidence in God—more richness of experience.—*Jay.*

PSALM XCIII.

3. *The floods have lifted up, O Lord,* &c. Various meanings have been attached to this verse. Some think there is an allusion to the violent assaults made upon the church by her enemies, and the goodness of God seen in restraining them. Others are of opinion that the words should be taken literally, and not figuratively, in this sense: Though the noise of many waters be terrible, and the waves of the sea more fearful still, God is more terrible than all. I would not be inclined to insist too nicely upon any comparison that may have been intended. I have no doubt the psalmist sets forth the power of God by adducing one brief illustration out of many which might have been given, intimating that we need not go further for a striking instance of divine power—one that may impress us with an idea of his tremendous majesty—than to the floods of waters, and agitations of the ocean; as in Ps. xxix. 4, the mighty voice of God is said to be in the thunder. God manifests his power in the sound of the floods, and in the tempestuous waves of the sea, in a way calculated to excite our reverential awe.—*Calvin.*

To this the translator of Calvin has added the following apposite note:—"Dr. Morison, after stating the opinion of Mudge, who thinks that this psalm was composed on the occasion of some violent inundation, which threatened a general confusion to the world, adds, 'It is more probable, perhaps, that the floods spoken of are entirely figurative; and that they represent in eastern phrase those powerful enemies by whom the peace of David and the ancient church was so often disturbed. But though the floods were lifted high, and threatened destruction to those who were within their reach, yet Jehovah was seen, as it were, riding on their most tempestuous billows, and amidst their mightiest tumult, his throne was unshaken and his kingdom unmoved.' In support of this view he refers to other passages of Scripture, as Is. viii. 7, 8; xvii. 12, 13; and Job xlvi. 7, 8, where the confederated enemies of God's church are compared to the tempestuous waves of the mighty ocean, which roll one after another with resistless fury upon the storm-tossed bark."

5. *Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.* Hengstenberg quotes Amyrald: "Thy house shall by thy sacred august presence remain for ever undefiled, nor shall it be violated or polluted by the insolence of thine enemies." He adds, "The *holiness* which *becomes* the house of such a God (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 1) must be preserved for it by himself. It is becoming in God that he take care that it be not *desecrated* by impious hand, comp. Ps. lxxiv.; lxxix. 1. He can at times, in punishment of the sins of his people, give it up to be laid waste by the ungodly world, but he must always see to it that it rise like a phœnix again from the ashes, so that its holiness is again restored to it. And he *has* seen to this. In room of the *first* house destroyed by the Chaldeans, there arose the *second*, and the second was not destroyed till it had become a mere shell without a kernel, and a glorious new erection of the house of God had come into life in the Christian church. The *world* did not destroy it; but God himself took down the poor provisional building when the proper one was completed: and this last one shall preserve its sanctity at all times in spite of all the assaults of the destruction-loving world. The fundamental passage is Ps. xxiii. 6, 'I dwell in the house of the Lord for ever,' לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים, properly 'for length of days.' The import in both passages is essentially the same. For the house on behalf of whose preservation the psalmist here expresses his confident hope is the house where the Lord dwells with his people and they with him; and it comes into view only in connection with this property. The preservation of the house for its own sake is not what is spoken of, but only in so far as it is the seat of the church; it is therefore the preservation of the *church* that lies near the psalmist's heart. The common translation is, the *maintenance of holiness* becomes thy house, it is becoming that it should be held holy by us. By this mistranslation the point of the psalm is destroyed. There are to be urged against it: that the thought in the connection is wholly a strange one—the design of the psalm is evidently to impart confident reliance on the protection of the Lord in oppressions from the world—that in Ps. xciii. xcii., and even in xci., the subject spoken of is what God does for his people, not what they should do for him; besides this, we have the analogous conclusion in Ps. xcii., the parallelism, the funda-

mental passage Ps. xxiii. 6, and also 'for the length of days,' and finally, the קדש, which does not signify maintenance of holiness, but holiness."—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM XCIV.

11. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.* Surely it is the design of God in all his dispensations, and by all the discoveries of his Word, to stain the pride of all flesh. The dust is the proper place for a creature, and that place we must occupy. What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.—1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had been thus characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and immortality, heaven and earth. The "Lord knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity." 2. Had vanity been ascribed to the exercises of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his *thoughts.* It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part are we touched. Even the *thoughts* of man are vanity. 3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought which is moved by it, as the leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "thoughts" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity. 4. If, during our state of childhood and youth only, vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period, however, admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man.* "Man *at his best estate* is altogether vanity." 5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal: "The Lord knoweth" it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.—*Fuller.*

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.* 1. Uneasy thoughts arise from the disordered state of the world. On this subject great consolation springs from the conviction that the Lord reigneth. There sit at the helm infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. These perfections are of such a nature that renders it impossible to lie dormant or inactive: they are in perpetual operation; and in the final result they will appear with ineffable splendour and beauty. "Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Under the administration of such a being, all events will infallibly terminate well—well for the interests of his glory, and well for the interests of his people. With whatever uneasiness we may contemplate the prevalence of moral disorder, and its portentous effects in a future state, the page of revelation assures us that ultimately the world will be filled with holy and happy creatures; that religion and virtue will prove triumphant; and that all nations shall see the glory of

God and worship at his footstool. And with respect to the final state of the wicked, there is every reason to conclude that their numbers will bear no proportion to those of the blessed, and that thus no more misery will be inflicted than what will be rendered conducive to the order and happiness of the universe. 2. Under painful apprehensions respecting the state of the church, the comforts of God are neither few nor small. It behoves us, on such occasions, to reflect that it is incomparably more his care than ours; that as the Saviour bought it with his blood, he will not fail to guide and govern it in the best manner possible. He has promised, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His interpositions in its favour afford a pledge of what he will still accomplish: "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." . . . Afflictions are designed to purify the church. 3. Under the distressing thoughts arising from the state of a Christian, as an individual, the divine comforts are proposed. In temporal affliction and privations how consoling is it to reflect that they are all ordered in infinite wisdom, and proceed from the purest benignity; that they will issue in our advantage, and that they will be but of short duration. This, may the afflicted Christian reflect, is not an eternal state; these afflictions are but for a moment. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—*Rev. Robert Hall.*

PSALM XCV.

The psalm is an invitation to the chosen people, the flock of God's pasture, to worship their divine Shepherd and to serve him with sincerity and willingness. The calling and training of a peculiar people were the means by which from an early period God had unfolded his design of bringing all mankind to a recognition of his sovereignty. Israel was thus the light that was to give light to the whole world; and in the dealings of God with Israel, and of Israel with God, were to be practically exemplified the mutual relation of the sheep and their Creator-shepherd. Hence the solemn summons to Israel to worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord their Maker, who was their God, they being the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. But what if the light should itself become darkness? What if those who were to be the special witnesses for God's sovereignty should themselves become like the world who despised it? What if those whose history was designed specially to illustrate the blessings of obedience to God's shepherd-rule should themselves tempt and provoke the God who had called them? Alas! the fathers of the Israelites had already thus transgressed, and God had been forced to punish them by not suffering them to enter into his rest. And hence the solemn warning in the latter part of the psalm, to succeeding generations of the chosen flock not to harden their hearts in like manner.

The particular appropriateness of such a warning in the days of Josiah's reign, when this psalm was probably written, was long ago noticed by Theodoret. The discovery of the lost book of the law had then shown how fearfully the Israelites of that and the preceding generations had departed from the precepts that had been given for their observance. And the spirit of God's sentence upon the rebellious generation of the wilderness, that they should not enter into his rest, had been then again displayed in the doom uttered by the prophetess Huldah: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the King of Judah hath read; because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched." The indirect evidence thus afforded of the date at which the psalm was written is corroborated by the protests which are introduced into the earlier portion of the psalm against the follies of idolatry, ver. 3–5: idolatry being the special sin for which the doom of God was in Josiah's reign hanging over the city of Jerusalem.

It would, however, have been mere mockery, after the doom of destruction on Jerusalem was pronounced, to bid the people be not hard-hearted like their fathers, had nothing more remained to which they might still look forward. But there were blessings in store. The series of psalms of which

this forms a part, Ps. xciii.-c., is, as we have already explained, essentially prophetical. Behind the darkness of the approaching Chaldean catastrophe the prophets had already hailed the advancing light of the future manifestation of God's kingdom; and it was to this that the people's expectations were now being directed by the psalmist. In closing his psalm with an allusion to God's promised rest, he implied that for the people of God a rest still remained. His own generation might at least welcome from afar that promised glory of God which their children should behold; and in that prospect might, with Moses towards the close of the wanderings in the wilderness, seek to be taught to apply their hearts to wisdom.

With the above view of the import of this psalm agrees the practical exposition of its latter verses given in the epistle to the Hebrews; if at least we allow the fact that the New Testament writer, living under the Christian dispensation, necessarily looked forward not to the first but to the second advent. For it has been the property of each divine dispensation under which men have lived to show the incompleteness of past events with reference to the promises which God has made. The Israelites after entering Canaan found that God's rest should not be theirs till God's Messiah should appear: hence the "to-day if ye will hear his voice" of the psalmist. And in like manner, after the coming of the Messiah and the proclamation of the divine kingdom, Christian believers still found that God's rest could not be fully theirs till all earthly toil and sin should be ended by the second appearance of their King in glory: hence the "to-day if ye will hear his voice" of the apostle. The name David, Heb. iv. 7, is, it need scarcely be remarked, a general designation of the Psalter, and does not indicate the authorship of the particular psalm quoted: we in like manner still apply the name Samuel to two historical books narrating events long posterior to that prophet's death.—*Thrupp.*

PSALM XCVI.

We shall only arrive at a true appreciation of the contents of this psalm when we perceive that it is the companion-psalm to Ps. xcv. It is in some sort the jubilant outpouring of praise to which Ps. xcv. had invited. Being too purely lyrical, too much a mere utterance of the joyousness of thanksgiving to stand alone, it attaches itself to the preceding psalm, which was in part of a hortatory character. The subject which lies at the basis of each psalm is substantially the same; viz. Israel a witness to the world for the sovereignty of God. But this witness was twofold. There was the witness of the people and the witness of the sanctuary. Ps. xcv. dwells upon the former; Ps. xcvi. upon the latter. The Israelitish people witnessed for the sovereignty of God, or so should have witnessed by a holy and dutiful obedience to his commandments. The Israelitish sanctuary witnessed for the sovereignty of God by being the symbol of his divine presence in the midst of his people on earth, by the consequent reverence with which it was regarded, and by the purity and solemnity of its ritual. The "honour and majesty," the "strength and beauty" of the Lord God of Israel, the King of the whole earth, were symbolized in various ways within the wall of the sanctuary of Zion; *e.g.* in the figures of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat. The reverence which was paid to the sanctuary by the Israelites, and which they claimed for it from all the world, was shown by the offerings which they brought into the temple-courts. The ritual of the sanctuary was pure; it repudiated the use of idols and likenesses, and bade the people bow down and worship the very Lord: it was also solemn; it ordered the use of holy apparel (E. V. *beauty of holiness*), and forbade such personal disfigurements as the heathen practised.

Such being the witness borne to the sovereignty of God by his dwelling-place, the Israelitish sanctuary, the people are in this psalm invited to sing a *new* song in anticipation of that future manifestation of God's sovereignty for which the establishment of his sanctuary in Israel was helping to prepare the way. They are bidden show forth day by day that salvation which they had been taught that he was working out. They are bidden proclaim in prophetical anticipation among the heathen that "the Lord reigneth;" in other words, that he has publicly assumed and displayed abroad his sovereignty. And at the tidings of his approaching advent to judge the world in righteousness all

creation also is summoned to rejoice; which, had it but the needful consciousness, it might well do, seeing that the Lord's coming would be the signal for the removal of that curse which had been inflicted even on the ground for man's sake.

In illustration of the close alliance between the contents of this psalm and those of the latter part of the prophecy of Isaiah, Hengstenberg notes the literal agreement in particular expressions between ver. 1, 11 and Is. xlii. 10. "The verbal reference to Isaiah in ver. 1," he justly remarks, "is designedly placed at the beginning, for the purpose of pointing out the prophetical fountain from which the lyric stream has flowed." It may deserve notice that the same chapter of Isaiah furnishes towards the close—more especially in ver. 19—the best illustration of the subject treated in the preceding psalm, viz. the shortcomings of that Israel who had been expressly designed to be the messenger and witness for God in the world; but who would only fully realize that high calling in the person of the Servant-Son, in whom the Father should be well-pleased. The true Israel was Christ.

In reference to the present use by the Christian church of Ps. xcvi., it is sufficiently obvious that we, whose lot is cast upon these latter days, intervening between the two advents of Christ, occupy a place in the midst of the fulfilment of the events to which the worshippers in the days of the psalmist looked forward. Now already, we are told, is the day of salvation. Yet still we expect a salvation to come, and rejoice that it should be nearer than when we first believed. Long ago did the herald proclaim the time fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven at hand; yet "thy kingdom come" is still our prayer. We have known of one who for judgment came into this world; yet to the great day of judgment we still look forward. And the result is that while we have already a new song to sing for what has been achieved, and find the psalms of Israel practically insufficient to express the manifold mercies of redemption which we have received of God through Christ, there must still be another new song for blessings yet to come; and thus the whole creation, which was to rejoice for the advent of the Lord to judgment, still groaneth and travaileth in pain together, even until now. Under these circumstances the church of Christ both in the several members of whom she consists and also in her collective capacity, must, like the Israelitish people and sanctuary of olden times, still witness for God's sovereignty to the world. "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth," must be the Christian's as it was the Israelite's motto.—*Thrupp.*

The exhortation, "Sing to the Lord a new song," could only be responded to by the heathen after the salvation which forms the subject of the poem had arisen. Behind the exhortation, however, addressed to the heathen to praise God, there lies concealed another address to the Israelites. The church of the Lord should be raised by this psalm to joyful hope, should be awakened to an active zeal to serve with uprightness the Lord who had formed such a mighty purpose with her. She beheld indeed the heathen preparing to destroy the kingdom of the Lord in the small corner which still remained to her. But at the same time she beheld at a greater distance with the eye of the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord himself coming, in the full glory of his being, to judge the whole earth, to judge the world in righteousness, and the nations in faithfulness.

As the promise which forms the basis of our psalm is as yet unfulfilled in its whole extent, the whole fulness of the heathen have not yet entered into the kingdom of God, the psalm is fraught with importance to us, not only in regard to its general thought, but even as to its very language. It is a *missionary hymn* for all ages of the church; and it becomes more and more appropriate to our times in proportion as the heathen begin to respond to the call, "Sing to the Lord a new song," and in proportion as we find in the melancholy condition of the church at home occasion to look with a hopeful eye towards the heathen world.—*Hengstenberg.*

8. *Give unto the Lord the glory . . . bring an offering, and come into his courts.* He calls upon the Gentile nations in so many words to render unto God the same worship which the Jews did; not that we must worship God now according to the outward ritual which was prescribed under the law, but he signifies that there would be one rule and form of religion in which all nations should accord. Now, unless the middle wall of partition had been broken down, the Gentiles could not

have entered along with God's children into the courts of the sanctuary. So that we have here a clear prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, who needed to have their uncleanness taken away before they could be brought into the holy assembly. The *mincha*, or oblation, was only one kind of sacrifice, but it is here taken to denote the whole worship of God, because it was a part of divine service more ordinarily practised. We see from this and other passages that the inspired penmen describe the inward worship of God under symbols common in the age when they lived. God would not have meat-offerings presented to him after Christ had come; but the words which the psalmist employs intimate that the doors of the temple, once shut, were now to be opened for the admission of the Gentiles. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews (ch. xiii. 15), tells us what are those sacrifices with which God will now be worshipped. Hence the absurdity of the Papists, who would adduce such passages in support of the mass and their other fooleries. We may very properly learn from the words, however, that we ought not to come empty-handed into the presence of God, enjoined as we are to present ourselves and all that we have as a reasonable service unto him (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 5).—*Calvin.*

PSALM XCVII.

The text here consists of the words of Isaiah, "The Lord reigneth," placed at the head of the psalm, and to which the psalmist looks, when on the eve of a time of great oppression, as to a clear light which shines at the end of a long dark cavern, and which he opposes to the cry of the world, which may be soon expected, "The king of Babylon reigns," or "Bel and Nebo reign." He brings forward, however, a new view of the reign of the Lord. The language here does not apply to the conversion of the worshippers of idols to the living God, but singly and alone to judgment on the idolatrous world, by which its pride shall be completely humbled, and with which Sion's salvation is connected. The figure of the indignant judge meets us in the whole of the first half. Nothing but shame is the portion of the worshippers of idols in ver. 7. Sion, according to ver. 8, only hears of it and is glad.

The beginning of the fulfilment of the hopes expressed here took place at the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel connected with it; comp. Is. xlvi. These hopes, however, in their main import, are *Messianic.* The appearance of Christ was of the nature of a judgment even for those among the heathen who became obedient to the gospel; the nullity of their whole previous existence became thereby apparent, and, in place of their pride and high-minded contempt of Sion, there appeared deep shame. While, however, behind the judgment, which is alone brought prominently forward in our psalm, the *grace* was concealed, which comes clearly forward in other passages, and especially in the preceding psalm: the view which is here the only predominant one comes forward, in other passages, alone in its power, for those who, like Julian for example, will know nothing of "the Lord reigneth." Even in our day the hopes here expressed are in the act of fulfilment. The exclamation, "The Lord reigneth," always sounds forth anew; the church calls it out to the naked and to the clothed world, to the worshippers of wooden and of imaginary gods, till it shall have reached to full and absolute truth, and all the kingdoms of the earth have become the kingdom of the Lord and his Anointed. —*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm, observes Theodoret, treats of the same subject as the preceding: it fore-announces both the advents of our Saviour. It is the only piece in the Psalter which, without any author's name attached, bears in the Hebrew the simple title *Mizmor*—"A Psalm." This marks it as emphatically a psalm among psalms, a genuine lyrical effusion: it forms, in fact, the lyrical complement to the more decidedly prophetical psalm by which it is preceded, standing to it in nearly the same relation as Ps. xcvi. to Ps. xcv., or as Ps. xxxiii. to Ps. xxxii. It is the "new song" of praise for the victory which the previous psalm represented the Lord as gaining, in behalf of his true worshippers, and for his own glory's sake, over the wicked, and over all that boasted themselves of idols. It contains, however, one new feature: the victory for which in Ps. xcvii. only Zion and the daughters of Judah were pictured as rejoicing, is in Ps. xcviii. treated as a source of gladness to all

the earth. Thus almost instinctively, as it were, did the Jewish psalmists, especially at seasons when their hearts were most expanded in praise, recognize the world-wide importance of God's dealings with their own little nation, and virtually anticipate the day of the catholicity of Zion, when there should be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ should be all and in all. That this levelling of all distinction between Jew and Gentile was never clearly present to their minds we may reasonably admit; but yet it was the legitimate development of their invitation to all the world to rejoice. In its formal structure the psalm falls into three parts. Announcing in the opening verses the victory that has been gained, and implying in the concluding words of ver. 6, "before the Lord, the King," that by that victory God has publicly vindicated his sovereignty abroad, the psalmist calls first on Israel (ver. 1-3), then on all mankind (ver. 4-6), lastly on all creation (ver. 7-9), to testify their joy.—*Thrupp.*

PSALM XCIX.

See under Psalm xci.

PSALM C.

See again under Ps. xci. for observations on the decade which closes with Ps. c.

There can be no doubt that Ps. xci.-c. belong to the same time and same author, that they form a connected series, that they are on the territory of the psalm poetry what the second part of Isaiah is on the territory of prophecy, and that we have before us in them a decalogue of psalms intimately connected together. The reference to the relation in which Israel stands to the might of the world is common to all these psalms. The objective view of suffering also is a common feature: the psalmist stands everywhere above it, no crying from the depths, no conflict with despair—the explanation being that the psalmist has to do with *future* suffering, and is preparing for it a shield of consolation. These psalms also are in common characterized by a confident expectation of a glorious revelation of the Lord, which the author, following up the prophetical writings, sees with the eye of faith as already present. It is common to them all to quote with marked intelligence from older passages, especially from the Davidic psalms, and from the second part of Isaiah, in connection with an originality of thought and expression which it is impossible to mistake. It is a common feature also that these quotations are in all cases taken from writings of a date prior to the captivity, in accordance with a series of other marks of a pre-Chaldaic era which are scattered everywhere throughout these psalms. It is common to them all that the tone never rises above a certain height, and never sinks beneath it, just as in the second part of Isaiah, in common with which our psalm bears the character of mild sublimity. There are common to them all a great many parallel passages (compare the exposition), the use of the anadiplosis, the predilection for the mention of musical instruments, proceeding from the *joyful* character of the psalm.

It is impossible also not to notice design in the arrangement. Two introductory psalms of a general character stand at the head: Ps. xci., an expression of joyful confidence in the help of God in all troubles and dangers; Ps. xcii., the greatness of God, which brings on the destruction of the wicked, and the salvation of the just; Ps. xciii. is then opened with the watchword, "the Lord reigneth," which henceforward is uttered on all sides, and applied for comfort and exhortation. The whole ends in the exhortation addressed to the whole earth to serve the Lord and to praise him, and to give him glory for the abundant salvation which he imparts—the full-toned chorus of all nations and tongues who know that the Lord is God.

We have already pointed to the intimate connection between this cycle of psalms and the second part of Isaiah. We have hence a very strong proof in behalf of the genuineness of this portion of Scripture.—*Hengstenberg.*

That the psalm depends upon the preceding one is clear, not only from the formal arrangement, but also from the entirely general character of what is here laid down as a basis for the exhortation "to serve the Lord," &c., by which many expositors, who did not observe the connection of both psalms, have been led to an entirely false view of the psalm, and a misapprehension of its Messianic character, which becomes clearly established as soon as it is ob-

served that the address in the whole psalm is directed to the *heathen*, and that they are exhorted, not only to shout with joy to the Lord, but also to be subject to him. The psalm forms not merely a conclusion to Ps. xcix.: it is assuredly with design that it is put at the end of the whole series, the ecumenic character of which becomes very obvious in it at the close.—*Hengstenberg.*

This noble version, *Old Hundred*, is, I believe, the most ancient now in common use in our language, as it is certainly one of the very best; faithful to the original, and yet full of grace and strength. It was first printed in the psalm-book published for the English exiles at Geneva in 1561; and is believed to have been written by William Kethe, a native of Scotland, who joined the exiles at Geneva in 1556. See the Third of the learned and valuable "Dissertations" by the Rev. Neil Livingstone, prefixed to the sumptuous reprint of *The Scottish Metrical Psalter of* 1635 (Glasgow, 1864). From an allusion in Shakespeare, the psalm in this version and the well-known melody named after it, would appear to have been as great favourites in Queen Elizabeth's time as they are among ourselves.—*Binnie.*

Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame, seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delight of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall for ever celebrate the praises of God.—Cobbin (in *Plumer*).

The grandeur and simplicity of our metrical version will be best seen by placing alongside of it the version of one of our most gifted poets:—

"Be joyful in God, all ye lands of the earth!
O, serve him with gladness and fear!
Exult in his presence with music and mirth,
With love and devotion draw near.

"For Jehovah is God—and Jehovah alone,
Creator and ruler o'er all;
And we are his people, his sceptre we own;
His sheep, and we follow his call.

"O, enter his gates with thanksgiving and song,
Your vows in his temple proclaim;
His praise with melodious accordance prolong,
And bless his adorable name!

"For good is the Lord, inexpressibly good,
And we are the work of his hand;
His mercy and truth from eternity stood,
And shall to eternity stand.
—*Montgomery.*

PSALM CI.

It is not agreed whether David wrote this psalm in early life, before his accession to power; after he had been partly acknowledged as king; or after all the tribes had given in their adhesion. The psalm has in it a tone of authority, indicating that David was already invested with legal functions. It expresses his solemn purpose. Some old writers call this the *Householder's Psalm.* In the seventeenth century, and perhaps earlier, it was customary among pious people to have a sermon preached at the setting up of each new family, or at the occupation of a new domicile. Old books give us accounts of these discourses. Some of them are expositions of this psalm. Nor is this perverting Scripture. A good king in his dominions ought to be like a good father and head of a family in his house. We have here the principles on which David would rule the nation.—*Plumer.*

This is the psalm which the old expositors used to designate "The Mirror for Magistrates;" and an excellent mirror it is. It would mightily accelerate the coming of the time when every nation shall be Christ's possession, and every capital a "city of the Lord," if all magistrates could be persuaded to dress themselves by it every time they go forth to perform the functions of their godlike office. When Sir George Villiers became the favourite and prime minister of King James, Lord Bacon, in a beautiful letter of advice, counselled him to take this psalm for his rule in the promotion of courtiers. "In these the choice had need be of honest and faithful servants, as well as of comely outsides who can bow the knee and kiss the hand. King David (Ps. ci. 6, 7) propounded a rule to himself for the choice of his courtiers. He was a wise and a good king: and a wise and a good king shall do well to follow such a good example; and if he find any to be faulty, which perhaps cannot suddenly be discovered, let him take on him this resolution as King David did, *There shall no deceitful per-*

son dwell in my house." It would have been well, both for the philosopher and the favourite, if they had been careful to walk by this rule.—*Binnie.*

1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment.* Very different opinions obtain regarding the meaning of this clause. We leave the reader to choose between that given in the commentary and that of Hengstenberg and Alexander. We quote the words of the latter, having ourselves a decided preference for the view presented by them:—

"As such a declaration of a present purpose in the Psalms is always followed by its execution, the older interpreters suppose *mercy and judgment* to be those which David meant to practise, as he states more fully in the remainder of the psalm. But besides that he says nothing in what follows of his *mercy*, there is no usage of the Psalms more settled than that *mercy and justice* are combined to denote divine, not human attributes, and that to sing and make music to *Jehovah* never means to praise something else in an address to him, but always to sing praises to himself. See Ps. ix. 11; xiii. 5; xviii. 49; xxx. 4, 12; xxxiii. 2; lxviii. 4; lxxi. 22, 23, in all which cases the form of expression seems to be derived from Judg. v. 3. But the psalm before us contains no such celebration of God's mercy and justice beyond this first verse. The best solution of this fact appears to be the one proposed by Hengstenberg, according to which the execution of the purpose here avowed is contained in Ps. ciii., which then, together with the one before us, and of course the intervening one, compose a *trilogy* or series of three psalms, all by David, each complete in itself, and yet designed to be connected with the others and interpreted by them. Supposing this to be the case, we must regard them all as psalms of David, whose name is prefixed to the third and the one before us, in which he lays down a rule, as it were, for his own government and that of his successors in the regal office. The impression made by these inspired instructions on the first of these successors may account for the remarkable coincidences of expression between this psalm and the Book of Proverbs."

God's work toward his people is a checkered work; a mixture of mercy and judgment: and when he exercises us with both, it is our duty to sing of both, and to be suitably affected with both; whether our circumstances be joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God; and in everything give thanks: neither the laughter of a prosperous condition nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for the sacred songs of praise. . . . We find the psalmist singing both of mercy and judgment, and so affording occasion to sing of both, 2 Cor. vi. 8-10; where you will see the blink and the shower, the mercies and judgments that are in their lot; how God hath set the one over against the other; by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, &c. Thus they have occasion to sing both of mercies and crosses, while they find the Lord supporting them under trials, and remembering mercy in the midst of wrath, and making all things work together for good to them; "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." The Chaldee paraphrase of this text is remarkable, and suitable to the doctrine I have raised from it, namely, it is as if the psalmist had said, "If thou bestowest mercies upon me; or if thou bringest any judgment upon me; before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all!"—*Ralph Erskine.*

2. *O when wilt thou come unto me?* Hengstenberg retains the interrogative form as in our English version:—"The affecting and anxious question, '*When wilt thou come to me,' blessing and helping me in my trouble?* which follows immediately after the first words of the description of the pious resolutions, in order to render prominent the object of these resolutions, and to exhibit them as introductory to Ps. cii., depends upon Ex. xx. 21, 'In every place where I erect a memorial for my name, I shall come to thee, and bless thee,' and is equivalent to, When wilt thou, faithful to thy promises, come to me, and bless me, thou who hast erected in Sion 'the city of the Lord,' ver. 8, a memorial of thy name, and hast chosen it as the place of thy sanctuary. The reference is all the more suitable, as David speaks here in name of his *family*, and the family represents the people to whom, in the fundamental passage, the promise had been given. Other interpretations have arisen merely from failing to observe the reference to this fundamental

passage, from which the indefinite coming is defined to be a coming fraught with *blessing* and *help*, and also from failing to observe the reference to Ps. cii., which makes itself known as the expansion of the cry, 'When wilt thou come to me?' by the clauses at the very beginning, 'Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come before thee,' according to which the coming of the Lord here can only be such a coming as goes hand in hand with the coming of the cry of the miserable to him. A host of different interpretations, like Luther's entirely arbitrary one, 'with those who belong to me,' are set aside by the simple remark, that מתי is never anything else than an interrogative 'when;' it is so also in Prov. xxiii. 35; comp. Michaelis on the passage."

PSALM CII.

It must be confessed that the theory of Hengstenberg and Alexander which regards Ps. ci.–ciii. as a series of psalms, all by David, each complete in itself and yet connected (see on last psalm), is with difficulty maintained in the face of the obvious allusion to the times of the captivity in ver. 13–21. We give *Dr. Binnie's* note:—"Ps. cii. brings before us the captivity in its third phase. The Lord had, by Jeremiah, announced a return after seventy years. This was spoken in plain terms. We are not surprised therefore to find that, as the years wore away, the fearers of God among the exiles began to look out for the fulfilment of the prediction. Daniel had come to understand 'by books, the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.' He knew more. He knew that when God holds forth the promise of blessings, he desires to be inquired of by his Israel with respect to it. Accordingly, he 'set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting;' and the burden of his prayer was that the Lord would at length turn the captivity of his people. 'O our God, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.' I refer to these exercises of the man greatly beloved, because I am persuaded that the chapter which relates them, Dan. ix., furnishes the best and most apposite commentary on Ps. cii. There is no reason to attribute the psalm to Daniel, but it gives expression to the very thoughts and feelings which filled his soul, as the time fixed for the return drew near."

This plaintive poem was written by some pious exile towards the expiration of the seventy years of captivity, during which the people of Israel were detained in Babylon. The holy land was now lying desolate and uncultivated; its towns and cities were demolished; Jerusalem was a heap of ruins; and the magnificent temple, which had so long been honoured with the presence of the Most High, was overthrown and consumed by the flames in which its enraged and victorious captors had involved it. How keenly this state of public and individual degradation was felt there are many expressive proofs in the Scriptures; and this psalm delineates the feeling by most affecting images and mournful exclamations. In the midst, however, of this intense and accumulated grief, the devout author seeks to draw for himself and his distressed compatriots some consolation from the unchangeable existence, the universal providence, and the faithful promises of God. He depicts with deep sensibility the ardent affection which still glowed in the bosoms of these outcasts from their native soil, and the fondness with which they cherished the hope that they should yet be restored to it; that the walls of their beloved and long-lost Zion should be rebuilt, and the praises of Jehovah yet again resound through the courts of his temple, and among the exulting multitudes of his worshippers.

But though these pious exiles did not altogether lose their hold upon the promises and covenant of God, the language of the psalm shows that their spirits were broken by the long years of their desolate condition, and their hearts depressed by the sorrows to which they were subjected in a strange land, dwelling amidst proud and insulting masters, and daily witnessing scenes of idolatry and impiety which pierced their bosoms with poignant grief. The author of the psalm had most probably been carried away captive in early youth; he had survived nearly to the end of the term, and now, worn with cares and anxieties, he was earnest with God that deliverance might speedily arrive, lest he should sink into the grave without revisiting the delightful scenes by which his imagination was enraptured,

without witnessing the fulfilment of the hopes which the prophets of God had excited by the predictions which they had delivered relative to the returning prosperity of his beloved country. He at length takes refuge in the eternity of God, and the everlasting continuance of his kingdom; and glancing at the bright display that was yet to come of the blessings of the reign of the Messiah, when the nations and kingdoms of the world should be numbered among his disciples and worshippers, he concludes by asserting the final triumph and ever-during glory of that brightest illustration of the wisdom, power, and benevolence of the Most High.—*Walford.*

6. *Like a pelican in the wilderness.* The pelican (*Pelicanus onocrotalus*) is spread over many parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its plumage, when full grown, is nearly all white, with an expanse of wings that sometimes reaches to twelve feet. The most remarkable feature in the pelican is the pouch, a curious dilatation of the throat, for the bestowment of the food till the hour of retirement and eating has come round. We have often seen one of the species sitting on the ledge of a rock a foot or two above the surface of the water, in pensive silence during the whole day; the continuity of its proceeding being only interrupted at distant intervals by the near approach of some unlucky fish, upon which it darted with unerring certainty and then resumed its wonted stillness. At other times we have observed them urging their way, with rapid flight, thirty or forty miles into the country, after a day's fishing, to feast in the lonely wilderness upon the contents of their well-stored pouches: and were then reminded of the words, "I am like a pelican in the wilderness." These birds are very distinctly represented in the paintings of ancient Egypt, in which they are represented as congregated among the reeds in great numbers, the natives collecting basketfuls of their eggs. They still frequent the marshes of the Delta of the Nile, and the islands of the river high up the country; they are also seen on all the lakes of Palestine, except the Dead Sea. —*Kitto.*

7. *A sparrow alone on the house-top.* Some understand the screech-owl; others, *a solitary bird* simply. "The word," says Dr. Kitto on the verse, "we have explained elsewhere to be a general term for birds, or perhaps for small birds in particular, while at the same time it is the proper name of the sparrow. It is quite clear that the word should be understood here in its general, not in its restricted signification; for the intimations do not by any means agree with a pert, active, chattering bird, fond of society, like the sparrow, but seem rather to require some moping bird, that sits watching solitary upon the house-tops in the night season. The owl might well enough be understood; but it is safer to take the reference indefinitely, as indeed most translators do, having instead of '*sparrow alone*,'—'*solitary bird*,' or '*solitary little bird*;' and '*bird alone*,' or '*little bird alone.*'"

Waterston the naturalist fixes on the *Passer solitarius*, which is known in Egypt and Syria, and in the south of Italy. This bird is like a thrush in size, shape, habits, and has a sweet plaintive note: but never associates with others of its species, not even with its own mate, except in breeding time. It is seen sitting solitary on house-tops, warbling it may be its plaintive song.—*Bonar.*

Ver. 25–27. These verses are quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. i. 10-12) as addressed to Christ, and form a part of the writer's proof from the Old Testament that he, as the Son of God, is higher than the angels. The quotation stands between two others, one from Ps. xlv. the other from Ps. cx., bearing on the same argument. But these are both of them Messianic psalms, and the principle on which the quotation rests is sufficiently obvious. It is by no means so easy to understand why the words of this psalm should have been quoted, as it does not seem at first sight to be a Messianic psalm. It may be observed, however, (1) that it is in this sense Messianic, that it looks forward to Israel's redemption from captivity and the future glory of Zion; (2) that there are two great lines of Messianic hope running through the Psalms, the one human, the other divine; the one of which the reign of the Son of David, the other of which the advent of Jehovah, is the great end and object. Here the psalmist is occupied with the latter, the appearing of Jehovah in his glory. (3) This identification of the Jesus of the New Testament with the Jehovah of the Old, is what we find elsewhere: comp. John xii. 41 with Is. vi. (Isaiah sees the glory of Jehovah,

John tells us it was the glory of Christ), and John xix. 37, "They shall look on him whom they pierced;" which in Zech. xii. 10, is language used directly of Jehovah. The difference between these quotations in John and the one in the epistle to the Hebrews is that the *argument* in the latter *requires* that the Messianic character of the psalm should be conceded. (4) Not only the revelation, the *appearing* of Jehovah in Zion, but also the creation of the world (ver. 25), would point to the great Mediator, the eternal Word, as the person here spoken of, and on this last ground especially the quotation in the epistle to the Hebrews seems to rest.—*Perowne.*

PSALM CIII.

Henry's first remark on this ode is: "This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition." He who with a warm heart and ordinary good sense enters into its spirit in any version of it extant, is more enriched by it, and has a better understanding of it, than he who with a cold heart can critically weigh every word in the original, and in each of the many translations given us by ripe scholars. The Hebrew and all the ancient versions give David as author. This is doubtless correct, although Clarke thinks it "refers to the times of the captivity, or rather to its *conclusion.*" He dates it B.C. 536; Scott, B.C. 1030. Delaney, Patrick, Morison, and Scott think David wrote it on occasion of delivery from dangerous sickness. Yet I have never heard it repeated with more ardour, or more appropriateness, than by God's people enduring great bodily distress.—*Plumer.*

5. *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's; i.e.* so that in strength and vigour thou art like the eagle. The rendering of the E. V. is grammatically justifiable, but very unnecessarily makes the psalmist responsible for the fable of the eagle's renewing its youth. This fable has received different embellishments. The version of Saadia, given by Kimchi, is as follows: The eagle mounts aloft into heaven till he comes near the seat of central fire in the sun, when, scorched by heat, he casts himself down into the sea. Thence he emerges again with new vigour and fresh plumage, till at last, in his hundredth year, he perishes in the waves. Augustine's story is more elaborate and far less poetical. According to him, when the eagle grows old, the upper curved portion of the beak becomes so enlarged that the bird is unable to open its mouth to seize its prey. It would die of hunger, therefore, did it not dash this part of its beak against a rock till the troublesome excrescence is got rid of. Then it can devour its food as before, vigour is restored to its body, splendour to its plumage, it can soar aloft; a kind of resurrection has taken place. Thus it renews its youth. And then, wonderful to say, having told this story gravely, he makes Christ the rock, adding, "In Christ thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's."—*Perowne.*

15–18. *His righteousness unto children's children.* The family is honoured in the Psalms, because it has a very honourable place assigned it in God's economy of salvation. Christian families are ordained to be nurseries for heaven. Not that the grace of God can be made an heirloom in any line of natural descent. It is not transmissible by man. Every child of Adam who is saved must have been the subject, in his own person, of a radical change, by the special grace of the Holy Spirit. But it is plain that we are not left altogether without information with regard to the quarters in which the ministration of the Spirit is ordinarily vouchsafed; and both Scripture and experience bear witness that God is wont to pour out his quickening Spirit especially on the seed of true believers. "The promise is to them and to their children." Under the Old Testament, as under the New, the initial Sacrament, which was the "seal of the righteousness of faith," was appointed to be administered to believers and to their seed along with them; and thus the Lord intimated that the children of those who are members of the covenant society are members along with them. That this is the principle underlying the domestic element which receives such honourable prominence in the Psalter, is plain from such passages as Ps. ciii. 15–18.

This promise respecting children and children's children, is intended, like every other, to be a stimulus to duty, not a pillow for sloth.—*Binnie.*

PSALM CIV.

The general argument of this divine ode of creation has been well expressed by Calvin. "This psalm," he says, "differs from the last, in that it neither treats of God's special mercies bestowed on his church, nor lifts us to the hope of a heavenly life; but painting for us

in the frame of the world, and the order of nature, the living image of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, exhorts us to praise him, because in this one frail mortal life he manifests himself to us as a Father." It is a bright and living picture of God's creative power, pouring life and gladness throughout the universe.

It is not surprising that this great hymn of creation should have called forth the warmest expressions of admiration from those who have studied it, and that they should have vied with one another in praising it as a master-piece which has rarely been exceeded. One writer (Amyraldus) "prefers it to all the lyric poetry of the Greeks and Romans." Another (Hupfeld) declares that "in Hebrew poetry there is little that can compare with it in precision of outline, and in the delicacy of its transitions, as well as in its warm sympathy with nature, and in the beauty of its images." A third (Sanchez) says, "The psalm is delightful, sweet, and instructive, as teaching us the soundest views of nature, and the best method of pursuing the study of it, viz. by admiring with one eye the works of God, and with the other God himself, their Creator and Preserver." The great naturalist, A. Von Humboldt, writes:—"It might almost be said that one single psalm represents the image of the whole cosmos. . . . We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such limited compass the whole universe—the heavens and earth—sketched with a few bold touches. The contrast of the labour of man with the animal life of nature, and the image of omnipresent, invisible power, renewing the earth at will, or sweeping it of inhabitants, is a grand and solemn poetical creation." "With what an eye of gladness," says Herder, "does the poet survey the earth! It is a green mountain of Jehovah, which he lifted above the waters; a paradise which he established for the dwelling-place of so many living creatures above the seas. The series of pictures which the poet here displays is in fact the natural history of the earth."—*Perowne.*

4. *Who maketh his angels spirits*, &c. According to the simplest and most obvious construction of this verse, it can only mean that God makes his angels or ministering spirits swift and ardent in his service. But such a statement would be wholly out of place in a psalm, the rest of which relates exclusively to the material creation. The best interpreters are therefore of opinion that *angels* and *ministers* are predicates, not subjects, or in other words, that the idea meant to be conveyed is, that he makes the winds his messengers or angels, and the flaming fire his minister or servant. This agrees exactly with the previous declaration that he makes the cloud his chariot or conveyance, and moves upon the wings of the wind. It may seem, however, to be inconsistent with the use made of the passage in Heb. i. 7, as a proof that the angels are inferior to the Son of God. But how could this inferiority be proved by the fact that the angels are spirits, or even wind and fire? The latter cannot be literally true, and if metaphorical, can only mean that they are swift and ardent in God's service, which they might be and yet equal to the Son in nature, who, considered as a messenger or agent of the Father, exhibits precisely the same qualities. The truth is, that the passage, as thus understood, is perfectly irrelevant and useless to the argument, and therefore that this mode of explaining it is not entitled to the preference, whatever difficulties may attend the other. Let it be observed, too, that the LXX., which is quoted in Heb. i. 7, is an exact transcript of the Hebrew, both as to the sense and collocation of the words, so that if the original admits of a different construction, it may be extended to the version likewise. The most satisfactory conclusion is, that the words are not quoted as an argument or proof of the inferiority of angels, but merely as a striking yet familiar form of words in which to clothe the writer's own idea, which is this, that angels are mere messengers and ministers, and as such may be classed with the material agencies which God employs in execution of his purpose. The wind and the lightning are God's angels and his ministers, and are expressly so described in the Old Testament; but they are never called his sons, much less addressed directly as the sovereign, eternal, righteous, ever-blessed God. Nor are the ministering spirits who share with these material agencies the character of messengers and servants, ever so described or so addressed. By thus supplying the suppressed links of the chain of argument, the verse before us in the only sense of which the context really admits, will be found not only as ap-

propriate as the other to the purpose for which it is quoted in the New Testament, but incomparably more so. —*Alexander.*

15. *Wine that maketh glad the heart of man,* &c. In these words we are taught, that God not only provides for men's necessity, and bestows upon them as much as is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life, but that in his goodness he deals still more bountifully with them by cheering their hearts with wine and oil. Nature would certainly be satisfied with water to drink; and therefore the addition of wine is owing to God's superabundant liberality. . . . But as there is nothing to which we are more prone than to abuse God's benefits by giving way to excess, the more bountiful he is towards men, the more ought they to take care not to pollute, by their intemperance, the abundance which is presented before them. Paul had therefore good reason for giving that prohibition (Rom. xiii. 14), "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" for if we give full scope to the desires of the flesh, there will be no bounds. As God bountifully provides for us, so he has appointed a law of temperance, that each may voluntarily restrain himself in his abundance. He sends out oxen and asses into pastures, and they content themselves with a sufficiency; but while furnishing us with more than we need, he enjoins upon us an observance of the rules of moderation, that we may not voraciously devour his benefits; and in lavishing upon us a more abundant supply of good things than our necessities require, he puts our moderation to the test. The proper rule with respect to the use of bodily sustenance, is to partake of it that it may sustain, but not oppress us. The mutual communication of the things needful for the support of the body, which God has enjoined upon us, is a very good check to intemperance; for the condition upon which the rich are favoured with their abundance is that they should relieve the wants of their brethren. As the prophet in this account of the divine goodness in providence makes no reference to the excesses of men, we gather from his words that it is lawful to use wine not only in cases of necessity, but also thereby to make us merry. This mirth must however be tempered with sobriety, first, that men may not forget themselves, drown their senses, and destroy their strength, but rejoice before their God according to the injunction of Moses, Lev. xxiii. 40; and, secondly, that they may exhilarate their minds under a sense of gratitude, so as to be rendered more active in the service of God. He who rejoices in this way will also be always prepared to endure sadness whenever God is pleased to send it. That rule of Paul ought to be kept in mind (Phil. iv. 12), "I have learned to abound—I have learned to suffer want." If some token of the divine anger is manifest, even he who has an overflowing abundance of all kinds of dainty food will restrict himself in his diet, knowing that he is called to put on sackcloth and to sit among ashes. Much more ought he whom poverty compels to be temperate and sober, to abstain from such delicacies. In short, if one man is constrained to abstain from wine by sickness, if another has only vapid wine, and a third nothing but water, let each be content with his own lot, and willingly and submissively wean himself from those gratifications which God denies him.—*Calvin.*

35. *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth.* Coming now to the great question brought up by these imprecatory psalms, are we in a condition to throw any light upon it? It is the undoubted law of Christ that we should love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us. Can we explain how the language of the psalmists can be reconciled with the sentiments and conduct enjoined in that command?

In some instances the reconciliation is easy. Take, for example, the prayer with which Ps. civ. concludes, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." The psalm is a meditation on God's works in nature, and has excited the admiration of the historians of natural science as the fullest and brightest expression of that sympathy with nature, and appreciation of its unity, in which the sacred poets so remarkably excelled all the pagan writers. At first sight it seems unaccountable that such a sunny joyous ode should be wound up with a petition for the rooting out of wicked men; it seems a jarring note in the song with which the church expresses her participation in the joy of her Lord over this fair world, the product of his beneficent wisdom. But,

in truth, the prayer is both in harmony with the song and necessary to its completeness. An anecdote will explain my meaning. It fell to my lot some years ago to undertake a walk of some miles, on a summer morning, along a sea-shore of surpassing beauty. It was the Lord's-day, and the language of Ps. civ. rose spontaneously in my mind as one scene after another unfolded itself before the eye. About half-way to my destination the road lay through a dirty hamlet, and my meditations were rudely interrupted by the brawling of some people, who looked as if they had been spending the night in a drunken debauch. Well, I thought, the psalmist must have had some such unpleasant experience. He must have fallen in with people, located in some scene of natural beauty, who, instead of being a holy priesthood to give voice to nature in praise of her Creator—instead of being, in the pure and holy tenor of their lives, the heavenliest note of the general song—filled it with a harsh discord. His prayer is the vehement expression of a desire that the earth may no longer be marred by the presence of wicked men—that they may be utterly consumed, and may give place to men animated with the fear of God, just and holy men, men that shall be a crown of beauty on the head of this fair creation. If this be the right explanation of the psalmist's prayer, it is not only justifiable, but there is something wrong in our meditations on nature, if we are not disposed to join in it.—*Binnie.*

PSALMS CV. CVI.

The Historical Psalms. I have not attempted to compute the relative space given to the historical element in the Psalter, but it must be very considerable. Several of the longest of the psalms are historical from beginning to end. Ps. lxviii., although it is brightened with an ultimate reference to Christ and the gospel times, is, in the first instance, a glowing recital of the march out of Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. Ps. lxxviii. cv. and cvi. all traverse the same field. In Ps. lxxviii. Asaph, taking up his parable, teaches the people to read the dangers and the duties of their own time in the light of the history of the nation between the exodus and the reign of Solomon. In Ps. cv., one of the later psalmists, taking the materials furnished by the same history, builds them up into a lofty ode of thanksgiving, that so the Lord's name may be hallowed in the continual commemoration of his mighty acts. Ps. cvi., which is also from the later period of Old Testament psalmody, partakes of a quite different character: it is a sorrowful confession of the sins by which the nation had brought dishonour on the name of the Lord and provoked him to anger in every period of its long history. These are the most prominent of the historical psalms. Others of less note will occur to the reader's memory; and there are, besides, historical allusions in very many of the non-historical psalms.

This historical quality of the Psalter deserves more consideration than it has commonly received. It proceeds upon the great principle of the unity of the church in its successive generations. The events of the past are celebrated, not as matters foreign to the men of the present generation, but as matters in which they are vitally interested. They are summoned to humble themselves in the retrospect of sins long past, and to say with Daniel, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee." They are invited also to commemorate with thanksgiving the years of the right hand of the Most High—the times when the Lord revived his people and prospered the work of their hands. . . .

Running through these and many other passages there is a sentiment of national continuity, analogous to that of personal identity. I know I am the same person I was twenty years ago: and, believing as I do, that all the events of my life are governed by the provident wisdom of God, I feel it to be my duty carefully to keep in memory and often to meditate upon, the way he has led me and tended me from my youth. I know it would be both a dereliction of duty and a forfeiture of inestimable benefits, were I to forget the errors of my youth or the dispensations of God's providence in ordering my lot. How often in times of perplexity or sorrow has the believer found the strongest comfort in calling to remembrance instances in which God heard his prayer and sent him help in years gone by! Well, the psalmists recognize a similar identity—a corporate

identity—as pertaining to the church, and linking together its successive generations. Accordingly, they represent the church of any given time as having very much the same interest in its prior history which any individual has in his infancy or childhood: and, in their hands, the principle is wonderfully fruitful both of admonition and comfort. How admirably is it applied, for example, in Ps. lxxvii.! In a time of deep distress, a dark and cloudy day, the daughter of Zion is at the point of despair: "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" How does her faith obtain the victory in this conflict? It is by reverting to her own history in better days, and calling to remembrance God's doings of old. "I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings." . . .

The facts of the history are viewed, not as mere *events*—things that fell out in those old times—but rather as divine dispensations, the judgments of the Most High, each of which, since it embodied a thought of God's heart, was full of instruction for the generations following. This is the view which the apostle teaches us to take of the history of God's ancient people; for the things which befell them, he writes, "happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." As Christ during his personal ministry instructed the church with spoken parables, so during the long centuries of the Old Testament he instructed it with acted parables. It is impossible to estimate the profit, in the shape both of doctrine and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness, which serious persons have derived from the events of the history of which so large a portion of the Psalter is the lyrical memorial.

Rationalists will, of course, sneer at this account of the historical psalms. They see in them nothing but national songs. If there be any lyrical faculty in a nation, it naturally applies itself to the celebration of the national heroes and the most memorable passages of the national history: and what more reasonable than to attribute to this source the historical poems of the Bible? The explanation can be dressed so as to captivate the unwary. But it will not stand. Not to dwell upon the fact that all the psalmists are careful to testify, either explicitly or by clear implication, that, in their judgment, the national history is a "parable," that it is everywhere replete with religious significance, and that their design in making it the burden of their song, is to spread abroad the lessons it was meant to teach—not to dwell, I say, on that fact, it is enough to remark, that there is no glorifying, either of the nation itself or of its great men. This is quite fatal to the notion that these psalms are national songs and nothing more. That the lyrical genius of the Hebrew bards was quite capable of celebrating great men and chivalrous deeds, is sufficiently proved by David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. Yet the Psalter does not contain one song of that order. There is not a single ode in praise of any national hero, Abraham or Joseph, Moses or Joshua or Samson. If David seems to be an exception, it is to be remembered that he occupies a singular place in the history, as the ancestor and type of Christ. When the Psalter extols him, it is not as a national hero, but as the Anointed of the God of Jacob; and the praise is intended for the royal office and the divine antitype. When David, in his individual person, comes before us, it is not as a hero at all, but in the totally different character of a sinner saved by grace. As for that glorifying of the nation which is the habit of every other lyrical literature, there is no trace of it in the Scriptures. On the contrary, the ordinary drift of the historical psalms is to inculcate on the people the remembrance of their sins, and to make them feel that in no respect were they intrinsically better than their neighbours. Let any one who doubts this read Ps. cvi. The key-note is that sorrowful confession with which, as we have seen, it begins, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly," and that penitential tone is maintained to the close. The poets of the nations have never written in this humbling strain. The world does not contain another instance of a collection of national lyrics so totally devoid of

everything that could inflame national vanity, so redolent of a sense of the unworthiness of the nation, and of the marvellous grace of the Most High.—*Binnie.*

PSALM CVII.

Here commences the Fifth and last Book of Psalms. (*See Introduction.*)

This Psalm may doubtless be regarded as based on the deliverance from the captivity. It is therefore a captivity hymn. It is not, however, to be regarded as historical in the strict sense, nor are the figures used to be explained as exclusively illustrating the condition of the Jews in Babylon and the joy of their deliverance. The psalm is a psalm of praise for the divine goodness illustrated by God's dealings with wilderness wanderers, with prisoners, with sick and dying men, and with sailors in a storm.

23, 32. *They that go down to the sea in ships*, &c. Fourth example: seafarers tossed and driven by the tempest, and brought at last safe into port. The description may be compared with the language of Jon. i. 11. It is the most highly finished, the most thoroughly poetical of each of the four pictures of human peril and deliverance. It is painted as a landsman would paint it, but yet only as one who had himself been in "perils of waters" could paint the storm—the waves running mountains high, on which the tiny craft seemed a plaything, the helplessness of human skill, the gladness of the calm, the safe refuge in the haven.

Addison remarks that he prefers this description of a ship in a storm before any others he had ever met with, and for the same reason for which "Longinus recommends one in Homer, because the poet has not amused himself with little fancies upon the occasion, as authors of an inferior genius, whom he mentions, had done, but because he has gathered together those circumstances which are the most apt to terrify the imagination, and which really happened in the raging of a tempest." "By the way," he adds, "how much more comfortable as well as rational is this system of the psalmist, than the pagan scheme in Virgil and other poets where one deity is represented as raising a storm and another as laying it! Were we only to consider the sublime in this piece of poetry, what can be nobler than the idea it gives us of the Supreme Being thus raising a tumult among the elements, and recovering them out of their confusion; thus troubling and becalming nature!"—*Spectator*, No. 489. *Perowne.*

Addison's beautiful rendering of this passage and application to Christian experience in the following hymn will be appreciated by the reader:—

"Think, O my soul! devoutly think,
How, with affrighted eyes,
Thou saw'st the wide-extended deep,
In all its horrors rise.

"Confusion dwelt on every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
O'ercame the pilot's art.

"Yet then, from all my griefs, O Lord!
Thy mercy set me free;
Whilst in the confidence of prayer,
My soul took hold on thee.

"For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High in the broken wave,
I knew thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

"The storm was laid, the winds retired,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roared at thy command,
At thy command was still!"

PSALM CIX.

This is the last of the imprecatory psalms. An abler or more satisfactory exposition of the principles involved in these than that presented by our author in his Introduction, can scarcely be desired (xxv.–xl.) He expresses himself doubtful of the Messianic character of the psalm and the designed application of its maledictions (ver. 8) to Judas. For a full examination of these points the reader is referred to Ps. lxix., *Appendix.* The admission under ver. 10 of wrong feelings on the part of David seems unnecessary even on the author's own principles, and proceeds from misapprehension of the true character of the psalm. It is the utterance of a holy man and prophet in sympathy with the law and providence of God.

PSALM CX.

The Messianic interpretation is the only one that yields a tolerable sense. Several alternatives have been proposed. For example, Herder and Ewald affirm that *David himself* is the prince to whom the psalm refers; that (like Ps. xxi.) it is a prayer for the king, in which the people speak of him as their Lord, whose throne was exalted at the right hand of the Lord's throne in Sion, and whom God had invested with

such honour in connection with his house, that he might be said to be a priest like Melchizedek, the ancient king of Salem. The theory can be dressed so as to wear a plausible air. But it will not bear examination. For (1) the psalm is in the title attributed to David's pen, and there is not a tittle of evidence pointing to any other writer. Would he have written of himself as "My Lord?" (2) The king is invited to sit at the right hand of Jehovah: a manner of speech nowhere else in Scripture used with reference to an earthly king. The Jewish kings sat "on the throne of Jehovah," as his representatives or vicegerents: not "at his right hand," as his fellows. (3) The people are represented as following the king in sacred attire, the beauty of holiness; that is to say, in holy sacerdotal vestments as an army of priests: a thing of which we find no trace in the history of David or any of the kings. It is Christ alone of whom we ever read that his "armies followed him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" when he went in righteousness to make war. (4) The king is, by the oath of God, constituted a priest, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." One would think this at least cannot apply to David. But the exigencies of the Rationalistic theory are great, and a bold attempt must be made. Ewald, girding up the loins of his ingenuity, sets himself to show that in David's reign there was a remarkable conjunction of the royal and sacerdotal functions. How he goes to work may be gathered from the picture of David's administration that has been recently sketched by the elegant pencil of the Dean of Westminster. Thus it is gravely related of the king, as if it were matter of ascertained fact, that "though not himself a priest, he yet assumed almost all the functions usually ascribed to the priestly office. He wore the priestly dress, offered the sacrifices, gave the priestly benedictions, walked round about the altar in sacred processions."

But all this is asserted without a shadow of warrant from the sacred narrative. No doubt David is related to have "offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings" at the bringing up of the ark; but that he did so with his own hand is no more likely than that Solomon, on a yet more solemn occasion, offered with his own hand the twenty thousand oxen and the hundred and twenty thousand sheep which he is related to have offered at the dedication of the house. David doubtless sings in Ps. xxvi. of "compassing God's altar;" but that is no more to be taken literally than the prayer in Ps. xxvii., that he might "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life." As for the allegation that he wore the priestly dress, it is enough to say that the ephod in which he arrayed himself at the bringing up of the ark was not the priestly robe so named; this was made of *byssus* (fine linen), whereas the king's was of ordinary linen—a festal robe, no doubt, but not peculiar to the priesthood. This is not all. Let it be supposed, for the moment, that all these fancies about David's intromissions with the functions of the priesthood had been matters of fact; let it be supposed that this man after God's own heart was accustomed to officiate often in rites which the law of Moses had so sacredly appropriated to the sons of Aaron, that Saul, for venturing to officiate in them on one solitary and pressing occasion, was rejected, he and his house, from reigning over Israel; let it be supposed that he performed habitually, with high commendation, sacred offices like that for which Uzziah, when he attempted to perform it but once, was sharply reproved and smitten on the spot with leprosy—would all this have sufficed to vindicate the application to David of the oracle in the psalm? Such conduct might, perhaps, have warranted the application of the priestly *title;* certainly it could not have warranted the lofty and emphatic declaration: "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The allegations so boldly made, if they had been true, would have amounted merely to this, that David exercised such priestly functions as belonged to all princes and heads of families under the patriarchal dispensation, before the law restricted the priesthood to Aaron and his sons—that he was a priest in the sense in which Abraham and Jacob were priests. But how far is this from answering to the grandeur of the oracle! The king here addressed is constituted a priest after the order of Melchizedek, to whom Abraham, the patriarchal priest, paid tithe in token of homage, and from whom he was content to receive a benediction; and the priesthood

is confirmed by the irrevocable oath of Jehovah, and declared to be a perpetual priesthood. It shows how hard men are pressed by the exigencies of their theory when they can plead for the application to David of a declaration so far-reaching and magnificent.

After all, it is no wonder the Rationalistic interpreters fight hard for the identification of David with the priest after the order of Melchizedek—the throned priest of Zion; for incredible as this is, it is less so than any other of the non-Messianic interpretations;—than that of Hupfeld, who suggests (not without a misgiving) that the psalm celebrates *the dynasty* of David rather than any individual king; and than that of some others who fancy they see in it a reference to the martial exploits of the priesthood in the age of the Maccabees. Besides these, I do not know that there is any other theory worth notice, unless it be the wild notion of De Wette, that the psalm comes from the pen of some prophet who chose in this way to express his approval of king Uzziah's presumptuous invasion of the priestly functions! It is to shifts like these that learned and able men are driven when they abandon the natural and obvious sense of this great Messianic psalm.—*Binnie.*

The reader will admire the following accurate and spirited paraphrase from *Perowne*:—"Thus saith Jehovah—it is his revelation that I hear, it is his word addressed to one who, though he be my son, is yet my lord—'I give thee honour and dignity equal to my own, I associate thee with myself in kingly rule and dominion, until I have subdued every enemy who shall dare to lift himself up against thee.'"

Then turning to the king who has thus been solemnly placed on the throne of Jehovah, and who rules as his vicegerent in Zion, the psalmist says, "From Zion, thy royal seat, shall Jehovah himself, on whose throne thou sittest, stretch out the sceptre of thy dominion. So close shall be the fellowship between him and thee. Thou shalt sit on his throne, he shall wield thy sceptre, his might shall be thy might, his kingdom shall be thy kingdom, and thou shalt not only subdue thine enemies, but before they are yet vanquished thou shalt rule in the midst of them. When thou goest forth to war, thine own people shall flock with glad and willing hearts to thy standard. They shall come clad, not in armour, but in holy vestments as ministering priests, for thou hast consecrated them to be thy priestly soldiers. They shall come a youthful host, in numbers numberless as the dews, bright and fresh as the dew from the womb of the morning.

"Yet another solemn word concerning thee have I heard. It is a word confirmed by an oath, the oath of the Most High which cannot be broken. By that oath he hath made thee Priest as well as King; King thou art, Priest thou shalt be henceforth. Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, or by descent through the Levitical priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek, Priest therefore not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile also,—Priest not for a time, but for ever."

Then, looking on the leader, the host, the conflict, the poet exclaims, "The Lord, the God of hosts who is with thee, O king, who is at thy right hand to succour and give thee the victory in the battle, hath already crushed the rival monarchs that dispute thy sway. Thou shalt be a judge and ruler among the nations whom he has given thee as thine inheritance. The vast battlefield is strewn with the corpses of thy foes. Far and wide hast thou extended thy conquests, vanquishing one leader after another; and thou shalt reap the fruit of thy victories like a warrior who, pressing hotly on the rear of his enemies as they flee before him, scarcely pauses for a moment to snatch a hasty draught from the wayside brook, and then with renewed ardour, with head erect and kindling eye, continues the pursuit. Thus shall victory be crowned and not a foe remain."

3. *From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth.* Thy "youth-like soldiery are as dew for beauty" (*Hengstenberg*); some say also in perpetual succession; and we must add, for number too. But is there not this other idea—they come suddenly as the dew appears, seen all at once under the light of the new risen Sun of Righteousness? And may we not adopt yet another from Hengstenberg, "All begotten from above"—as Job xxxviii. 28 might lead us to remember. The metre version of Tate and Brady has thus expressed some of these views:—

"Shall all (redeemed from error's night)
Appear as numberless and bright
As crystal drops of morning dew."

—*Rev. A. A. Bonar.*

7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.* Not a few interpreters expound this verse in a very harsh manner: that the carnage would be so great as to cause the blood of the slain to flow in torrents, out of which Christ, the Conqueror, might drink till he was satiated. Akin to this is the exposition of those who would have it to be a figurative representation of misery and grief, and thus descriptive of the many afflictions to which Christ was liable during this transitory life. The similitude seems rather to be drawn from the conduct of brave and powerful generals, who, when in hot pursuit of the enemy, do not suffer themselves to be diverted from their purpose by attending to luxuries; but without kneeling down are content to quench their thirst by drinking of the stream which they are passing. It was in this way that Gideon found out the brave and warlike soldiers; regarding such as kneeled down to drink as destitute of courage, he sent them back to their homes. It therefore appears to me that David figuratively attributes military prowess to Christ, declaring that he would not take time to refresh himself, but would hastily drink of the river which might come in his way. This is designed to strike his enemies with terror, intimating to them the rapid approach of impending destruction. Should any one be disposed to ask, Where, then, is that spirit of meekness and gentleness with which the Scripture elsewhere informs us he shall be endued? Is. xlii. 2, 3; lxi. 1, 2; I answer that as a shepherd is gentle towards his flock, but fierce and formidable towards wolves and thieves; in like manner Christ is kind and gentle towards those who commit themselves to his care, while they who wilfully and obstinately reject his yoke, shall feel with what awful and terrible power he is armed. In Ps. ii. 9 we saw that he had in his hand an iron sceptre, by which he will beat down all the obduracy of his enemies; and, accordingly, he is here said to assume the aspect of cruelty, with the view of taking vengeance upon them. Wherefore it becomes us carefully to refrain from provoking his wrath against us, by a stiff-necked and rebellious spirit, when he is tenderly and sweetly inviting us to come to him.—*Calvin.*

PSALM CXI. CXII.

Acrostic Psalms. See *Appendix* on Ps. xxv. The only feasible method (of exhibiting the structure of these psalms to an English reader) is to omit from our alphabet the four letters that are of least frequent use, and make the two and twenty that remain stand for the two and twenty letters of the Hebrew. Thus:—

PSALM CXI.

Hallelujah!

1. A dore will I Jehovah with all my heart:
   B oth in the meeting of the upright and in the congregation.
2. C onfessedly great are the deeds of Jehovah:
   D elighters in them search them out.
3. E xcellent for honour and majesty is his work:
   F or evermore doth his righteousness endure.
4. G racious and compassionate is Jehovah:
   H is wonderful works hath he made to be remembered.
5. J ehovah hath given food to them that fear him:
   K ept his covenant for ever.
6. L oudly hath he declared to his people the might of his deeds:
   M aking them to inherit the heathen.
7. N otable for truth and judgment are the deeds of his hand:
   O n all his commandments men may trust.
8. P lanted firmly are they for ever and ever:
   Q uestionless is their truth and uprightness.
9. R edemption hath he sent to his people:
   S tablished for ever his covenant:
   T errible and holy is his name.
10. U nderstanding pertaineth to all who obey the commandments:
    W isdom's beginning is the fear of Jehovah:
    Y ears without end shall his praise endure.

—*Binnie.*

PSALM CXII.

6. *Surely he shall not be moved.* There is a strange power in piety to beget calmness, self-possession, and firmness of character, even in the midst of fierce assaults and of dire conflicts with every kind of adversity and adversary. *Luther:* "Unless there were in us divine strength communicated by Christ, it would be impossible that we could stand against such numerous and mighty assaults of temptation." The righteous will not be dismayed when all nature is dissolving. *Arnd:* "Look at examples —how Moses says at the Red Sea, Stand still and see the salvation of God. How does Jehoshaphat stand firm as a wall when a hundred thousand men invade

the land, and he slays them all with one song of praise! How firmly does David stand when hunted by Saul! How overwhelmed is Saul with despair when his land is invaded by the Philistines, and he seeks advice from a witch! What firmness is in Daniel when in the lions' den! What joy in Stephen! How did the holy Basilius say when Cæsar Valens threatened him so dreadfully: 'Such bugbears should be set before children!' Athenasius when Julian persecuted him: 'He is a mist, and will soon disappear!'" There is indeed a fascinating power in the world to make its devotees dream of happiness as long as their prosperity lasts. But it is only the child of God who can in triumph repeat Hab. iii. 17, 18.—*Plumer.*

PSALM CXIII.

With this psalm begins "the Hallel," which was sung at the three great feasts, at the feast of the dedication, and at the new moons. At the feast of the passover it was divided into two parts, the first of which, consisting of Ps. cxiii. cxiv., was sung before the meal, that is, before the second cup was passed round; and the second, consisting of Ps. cxv.–cxviii., after the meal, when the fourth cup had been filled. This last, probably, was "the hymn" which our Lord and his apostles are said to have sung (Mat. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26) after his last passover.

Paulus Burgensis styles Ps. cxiii.–cxviii. *Alleluia Judaeorum Magnum*, and this has been a very usual designation. But according to the ancient Jewish tradition this series of psalms is called simply "the Hallel," or sometimes "the Egyptian Hallel," whereas the name "Great Hallel" is given to Ps. cxxxvi. (See Delitzsch, from whom the above is taken.) The psalm may be said to be a connecting link between the song of Hannah and the Magnificat of the Virgin.—*Perowne.*

9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house.* Hannah's song in 1 Sam. ii. 5–8, seems kept in view, as well as God's own words to David, 2 Sam. vii. 8, 9, all to furnish suitable language to express redemption-acts. And the long-barren woman of ver. 9, while it reminds us of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Manoah's wife, Elizabeth, who all in the end were "filled with joy," may point to one and the same period of the world's history from its full and final consummation, as does Is. liv. 1. Isaiah seems expressly to allude to this psalm as receiving its fulfilment to the full when the Messiah's work of suffering (Is. liii.) issues in illimitable blessing to Israel and the world.—*Rev. A. A. Bonar.*

PSALM CXIV.

2. *Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his dominion.* It is indeed remarkable that the name of God is not mentioned here, and is introduced only at the close of the psalm. It may be, as our author suggests, that the psalm was designed to be used in connection with Ps. cxiii., which consists entirely of the praises of God. But there is a reason for the omission of the name in the first instance, in the requirements of poetic structure and beauty. Addison was much struck with the fact in this view. "I perceived," says he, "a beauty in the psalm which was new to me. The poet utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun go without a substantive than he will so much as mention anything of divinity there. . . . If God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards, and then, with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once with all his majesty." Hengstenberg has the same idea, and observes that the questions in ver. 5, 6 would have been anticipated, and their appropriateness destroyed, by an earlier introduction of the name of God.

PSALM CXV.

The general tenor of the psalm, and its particular contents, make it perfectly well suited to the state of things in which the series is supposed to have been written, namely, that succeeding the return from exile, but before the actual rebuilding of the temple.—*Alexander.*

PSALM CXVI.

Various opinions have been entertained regarding the date of this beautiful psalm. Some have assigned it to David, others to Hezekiah. The expression of feeling in the psalm, "the mingled joy and grief" (*Alexander*), answers well to the times immediately

succeeding the return from the captivity; while the Chaldaic forms constantly occurring in the original seem to place the matter beyond a doubt. And to this date, and on these grounds, the psalm is assigned by Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Alexander, Thrupp, and Perowne.

13. *The cup of salvation*, &c. This is doubtless an allusion to the drink-offering of strong wine poured out before the Lord in the holy place (Num. xxviii. 7). But the Jews had also in their families a more private cup of thanksgiving, as well for the common benefits of life, as for the more marked instances of the Lord's mercies and deliverances. The use of this was daily, at each meal, and more solemn at a festival. On the daily occasions the master took the cup, and thus "called upon the name of the Lord:" "Blessed be our God, the Lord of the world, who hath created the fruit of the vine;" and having first drunk of it himself, it was presented in order to all who were present. This observance was more marked at the celebration of the passover, and was followed by Christ at the last passover which he kept with his disciples.—Kitto, *Pict. Bible.*

PSALM CXVII.

Of the psalms written after the return, a large proportion were primarily designed for use in the temple service. So strongly marked is this design, that, if they were collected into one book, it might be entitled, "The Songs of the Second Temple." Some of them are very short—Ps. cxxxiv. for example.

Ps. cxvii. belongs also to this time. It is the shortest of all the psalms; the shortest, but not the least weighty. It is cited in the epistle to the Romans as celebrating beforehand the calling of the Gentiles; for it invites them to unite with God's ancient people in worshipping him. Since the invitation is addressed to all the nations, we may look upon it as truly a millennial song. Overleaping the intervening centuries, it anticipates the happy time when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in.—*Binnie.*

PSALM CXVIII.

These temple songs are not all short. Some of them are among the longest in the Psalter. Ps. cxviii. may be named as a beautiful example. It is evidently a temple song; and the critics, with great unanimity, ascribe it to the century after the return. The precise occasion on which it was written is a point on which opinions differ; some of the critics, like Ewald, holding that it was composed to be sung at the feast of tabernacles, when the remnant who returned commenced to offer again the daily sacrifice; others, with Hengstenberg, connecting it with the laying of the foundation of the house; while others again, with Delitzsch, connect it with the solemnity of the dedication. The truth seems to be that it is simply a festal psalm of the second temple, which may well have been sung on any or all of the occasions named by the critics, but is not to be restricted to any one in particular. It breathes a spirit of jubilant trust in the Lord, in the midst of infinite difficulties and perils. Its trumpet tones made it one of Luther's favourites. In the midsummer of 1530, when Melancthon was deputed to present the Confession of the Protestant churches of Germany to the diet at Augsburg, Luther was advised to abstain from any public appearance. Looking out from his retirement on the perils of the time, "the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them from fear," he found in Ps. cxviii. a word in season, and set his pen to work on an exposition of it. In the dedication, which is dated "*ex Eremo*, the 1st of July, MDXXX.," he gives characteristic expression to his love for this portion of the divine Word. "Since I am obliged to sit here idle in the desert, and, moreover, must sometimes spare my head, and give it a rest and holiday from my great task of translating all the prophets, I have gone back to my mine of wealth, my treasure. I have taken in hand my precious psalm, the *Confitemini*, and put on paper my meditations upon it. For it is my psalm that I delight in. For although the whole Psalter and the Holy Scripture is dear to me, my proper comfort and life, I have taken so to this psalm in particular that I must call it my own. Many a service has it done me; out of many great perils has it helped me, when help I had none, either from emperor, or king, or saint, or wise and prudent. I would not give it in exchange for the honour, wealth, and power of all the world, pope, Turk, and emperor. In calling the psalm mine own, I rob no man of it. Christ is mine, nevertheless he is the same Christ to

all the saints that he is to me. Would God that all the world would challenge the psalm for their own as I do; it would be such friendly contention as scarce any unity or love could compare with. Alas! that there should be so few, even among those who might well do it, who will once say to the Holy Scriptures, or to some particular psalm, Thou art my book: thou shalt be mine own psalm."—*Binnie.*

12. *They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns.* The reader has here in miniature two of the finest images in Homer; which, if his curiosity demands to be gratified, he will find illustrated and enlarged, *Iliad*, ii. ver. 86.

The following host,
Poured forth by thousands, darkens all the coast.
As from some rocky cleft the shepherd sees,
Clustering, in heaps on heaps, the driving bees,
Rolling and blackening, swarms succeeding swarms,
With deeper murmurs and more hoarse alarms;
Dusky they spread, a close embodied crowd,
And o'er the veil descends the living cloud;
So from the tents and ships a lengthening train
Spreads all the beach and wide o'ershades the plain,
Along the region runs a deafening sound;
Beneath their footsteps groans the trembling ground.
—Pope's Translation.

The other image, *the fire consuming the thorns*, we find in the same book, ver. 455:

As on some mountain, through the lofty grove,
The crackling flames ascend and blaze above;
The fires expanding, as the winds arise,
Shoot their long beams, and kindle half the skies:
So, from the polished arms and brazen shields,
A gleaming splendour flashed along the fields.
—Pope's Translation.

The arms resembling a gleaming *fire* is common both to the psalmist and Homer; but the idea of that fire being *quenched* when the army was *conquered* is peculiar to the psalmist.—*Adam Clarke.*

22. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.* It is to be regretted that the author should have maintained that the psalm in general, and this verse in particular, had no original or designed reference to the Messiah, but simply contained principles and statements which might be accommodated to him, or "might be used as expressive of what occurred to him." There does not seem to be any serious difficulty in the way of Messianic reference either in ver. 10 or 17, to both of which the author has made his appeal. (See his introduction to the psalm.) For if we understand the compassing nations (ver. 10) of the Samaritans, Idumeans, and Ammonites, who sought to hinder the Jews in rebuilding the city and temple, it is not inconsistent with the usage of prophecy to carry the mind forward to the Redeemer and his church, against whom the nations rise in vain. Again, if we suppose the restored nation and church of Israel at this time to rejoice in the assurance that they should not be delivered over to death or extinction, have we not a foreshadowing of the grand assurance that Christ and his church shall endure for ever, and discover and proclaim the works of God?

But it is not necessary to the Messianic sense of particular passages in a psalm that we should be able to interpret the entire psalm in all its parts of him. Whatever, therefore, may be thought of the above remarks, we maintain that the express and frequent applications of ver. 22 in the New Testament to Christ by himself and his apostles must be held as setting the matter at rest for ever.

We subjoin *Perowne's* note, as it contains a just exposition of principles, and renders it unnecessary to remark on other prophetic parts of the psalm:—"Under this figure, suggested, no doubt, by the building of the temple, and the poor aspect it presented as compared with the first temple, is denoted primarily the people of Israel. They had been despised by their heathen masters, but now, by the good hand of their God upon them, they had been lifted up into a place of honour. They, rejected of men, were chosen of God as the foundation-stone of that new spiritual building which Jehovah was about to erect; that temple of the world, the foundation of which was to be laid in Zion. In Mat. xxi. 42–44; Mark xii. 10, 11; Luke xx. 17, our Lord applies the words of this and the next verse to himself. The quotation was, it would seem, purposely taken from the same psalm from which the multitude had just before taken their words of saluta-

tion, as they went forth to meet him and conduct him in triumph into Jerusalem. But there is more than an application of the words. Israel is not only a figure of Christ, there is an organic unity between him and them. Whatever, therefore, is true of Israel in a lower sense, is true in its highest sense of Christ. Is Israel God's 'first-born son?' The name in its fulfilment belongs to Christ (Mat. ii. 15); if Israel is 'the servant of Jehovah,' he is so only as imperfectly representing him who said, 'My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work.' If Israel is the rejected stone made the head of the corner, this is far truer of him who was indeed rejected of men, but chosen of God and precious; the corner-stone of the one great living temple of the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentiles (comp. Eph. ii. 20). See the use of the same figure in its application to our Lord by Peter, Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7.

"The passage which forms the connecting link between this psalm and the New Testament quotations is Is. xxviii. 16, 'Behold it is I who have laid securely in Zion a stone, a tried precious corner-stone, most securely laid, he that believeth (*i.e. resteth thereon*) shall not flee (through fear of any evil).' In this passage the Messianic reference is still more direct, even if we suppose a primary reference to the house of David. (It is interpreted as Messianic both by the Targum and, amongst the rabbinical commentators, by Rashi.) In marked contrast with this, it is said of Babylon, Jer. li. 26, 'They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for a foundation.'"

PSALM CXIX.

There is no psalm in the whole collection which has more the appearance of having been exclusively designed for practical and personal improvement, without any reference to national, or even to ecclesiastical relations, than the one before us, which is wholly occupied with praises of God's Word or written revelation, as the only source of spiritual strength and comfort, and with prayers for grace to make a profitable use of it. The prominence of this one theme is sufficiently apparent from the fact to which the Masora directs attention, that there is only one verse which does not contain some title or description of the Word of God. But notwithstanding this peculiar character, the position of the psalm in the collection, and especially its juxtaposition with respect to Ps. cviii.–cxviii., its kindred tone of mingled gratitude and sadness, and a great variety of minor verbal correspondences, have led some of the best interpreters to look upon it as the conclusion of the whole series or system of psalms, supposed to have been written for the use of the returned Jews, at or near the time of the founding of the second temple. The opinion, held by some of the same writers, that the ideal speaker, throughout this psalm, is Israel, considered as the church or chosen people, will never commend itself as natural or likely to the mass of readers, and is scarcely consistent with such passages as ver. 63, 74, 79, and others, where the speaker expressly distinguishes himself as an individual from the body of the people. The same difficulty, in a less degree, attends the national interpretation of the psalms immediately preceding. Perhaps the best mode of reconciling the two views is by supposing that this psalm was intended as a manual of pious and instructive thoughts, designed for popular improvement, and especially for that of the younger generation after the return from exile, and that the person speaking is the individual believer, not as an isolated personality, but as a member of the general body, with which he identifies himself so far, that many expressions of the psalm are appropriate only to certain persons or to certain classes in the ancient Israel. To this design of popular instruction, and especially to that of constant repetition and reflection, the psalm is admirably suited by its form and structure. The alphabetical arrangement, of which it is at once the most extended and most perfect specimen, and the aphoristic character, common to all alphabetic psalms, are both adapted to assist the memory as well as to give point to the immediate impression. It follows, of course, that the psalm was rather meant to be a storehouse of materials for pious meditation than a discourse for continuous perusal. At the same time, the fact of its existence in the Psalter is presumptive proof that it was used in public worship either as a whole, or in one or more of the twenty-two stanzas into which it is divided, corresponding to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, all the eight verses of each paragraph

beginning with the same Hebrew letter. —*Alexander.*

Of the Bible acrostics, the most noteworthy, in every respect, is Ps. cxix. Its structure is exceedingly simple. The hundred and seventy-six verses of which it consists are alphabetical couplets, being eight for every letter; so that there are twenty-two alphabetical stanzas, each containing eight couplets. Here also it is easy to discover the reason that led to the adoption of the alphabetical arrangement. The psalm is a meditation on God's law—the meditation of a soul in the presence of the Lord and in communion with him. In such a psalm it is sententious wisdom rather than high poetry that we look for: and a better vehicle for the aphorisms of sententious wisdom could hardly be imagined than that which is furnished by this acrostic. If, as we believe, it dates from the age of Ezra, it affords a welcome corroboration to the conclusion we reached on other grounds, that Ezra and his contemporary scribes were men of a very different stamp from those who bore the same title at a later period. We discern in them, no doubt, the familiar features of the scribe. The jots and tittles of the law were not despicable in their eyes. Raised up to *edit* the Old Testament Scriptures, they did the work well. But they had an eye and a heart that could appreciate the weightier matters of the law. They could look up from their studies about the letter of the divine word, and ejaculate to God such prayers as these, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times;" "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."

It is curious and not uninstructive to mark the opinions expressed regarding this psalm by the modern critics. Most of them have remarked, and very justly, that, like the rest of the sacred acrostics, it seldom rises into the region of poetry; being rather a versified meditation than a poem in the strict sense of the word. But some have gone further. Dr. Hupfeld, for example, whose *Commentary on the Psalms*, the fruit of the studies of a lifetime, is in many respects invaluable, ventures to charge it with "monotony and poverty of thought," and to contrast it disparagingly with the other psalms of the sententious or aphoristic order. An opinion like this is worthy of being put on record, as illustrating an observation which in these days it is very important that people should lay to heart and remember. A very able man, learned, painstaking, of excellent literary taste, and honest enough in his way, may nevertheless be utterly incompetent in matters lying within the domain of spiritual religion. The criticism of the learned commentator reminds one of a remark in Augustine's preface to his homilies on the same psalm. After mentioning that a sense of the difficulty attaching to a just exposition of this particular psalm had long deterred him from publishing anything on it, as he had done upon all the rest, he goes on to say, "Doubtless there are other psalms reputed difficult, the sense of which really is wrapped in obscurity. But then, whatever else may be difficult about them, this at least is plain, that they *are* obscure. Not so here. This psalm has an air of simplicity that might lead one to suppose that what it requires is a hearer or reader, not an expositor." Our Rationalistic critics, it is plain, have not mastered the difficulty so wittily pointed out by Augustine. They have not discovered that the psalm is deep. Its scope and probable history have been admirably explained by Matthew Henry. "It seems to me," he observes, "to be a collection of (the psalmist's) pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and, toward the latter end of his life, gathered out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's Proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn," he adds, "by the psalmist's example, to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining communion with God and keeping the heart in frame for the most solemn exercises of religion, but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting and for the expressing of our devout affections. What some have said of this psalm is true. He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him." Those who have visited much among the godly in affliction will not hesitate to prefer this

estimate of Ps. cxix. to Dr. Hupfeld's. So far from being monotonous and jejune, it possesses quite a singular aptitude to refresh the souls of the weary; its two-and-twenty clusters yield the wine of the kingdom as copiously as any to be found in all the Bible. The remark applies, although in a somewhat lower degree, to several other alphabetical psalms—Ps. xxv. xxxiv. and xxxvii. If inferior to many others in poetical embellishment, they are inferior to none in the variety and richness of the aliment they minister to devout meditation.—*Binnie.*

Hengstenberg calls the psalm "A Children's Sermon." But it suits all classes. From its alphabetical character the Masora entitle it "The Great Alphabet;" but from its peculiar excellence many style it "The Saints' Alphabet." Bishop Cowper calls it "A Holy Alphabet, so plain that children may understand it—so rich and instructive that the wisest and most experienced may learn something from it." Clarke: "Like all other portions of divine revelation, it is elegant, important, and useful." Jebb: "It is well known that upon no portion of holy Scripture have so many practical commentaries been written. . . . It has been justly considered in all ages of the church as a storehouse of religious wisdom." One of its highest excellencies is its varied instruction on the nature of true, ex-experimental religion. In this psalm, says Venn, "the whole inner man is delineated, and the several changing frames of our poor hearts, and the several blessed motions and inspirations of the Holy Spirit, are touched in a very affecting manner. This is the psalm I have often had recourse to when I could find no spirit of prayer in my own heart, and at length the fire was kindled and I could pray." President Edwards, in his work on *Religious Affections*, says: "I know of no other part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated."—*Plumer.*

PSALMS CXX.–CXXXIV.

Songs of Degrees. A considerable variety of opinion exists with regard to the meaning of this title, as may be seen from the author's introduction to the first in the series. The opinion that the *songs of degrees* or *ascents* were used in connection with the periodical going up of the tribes to Jerusalem, seems to be gaining ground, Mudge, Hengstenberg, Alexander, and Oehler (article "Psalms" in *Imperial Bible-Dictionary*) adopt and defend this view. It is the view adopted in a very admirable little volume on the *Pilgrim Psalms*, by Dr. M'Michael of Dunfermline, professor of ecclesiastical history to the United Presbyterian Church. We design to draw on the materials furnished by the professor in his exposition of these songs.

The objections alleged by Mr. Barnes against this view will be found ably and satisfactorily, if not conclusively, met in the following extracts from Hengstenberg and Oehler:—

Other expositors seek the origin of the appellation in the fact that *these songs were sung by the pilgrims who went up yearly to Jerusalem at the great festivals.* This explanation is undoubtedly the correct one. The עלה is the usual expression for these festival-journeys; comp. Ps. cxxii. 4; Ex. xxxiv. 24; 1 Ki. xii. 27, 28. The המעלות, *the* journeys to Jerusalem, by way of pre-eminence, can only be those ordinary journeys which were yearly repeated and prescribed in the law; comp. Ps. cxxii. 4. All other journeys to Jerusalem would have needed some expression added to define them. *Further*, the oldest to all appearance of these pilgrim-songs, that, viz., which was composed by David soon after the elevation of Zion to the sanctuary, and at the commencement of the pilgrimages to it, Ps. cxxii., contains two clauses explanatory of the מעלות, corresponding to the explanation of the משכל in Ps. xxxii., viz., "we will go to the house of the Lord," in ver. 1, and "to which the tribes go up," עלו in ver. 4. The circumstance, moreover, that some of these psalms have, in accordance with the most manifest internal marks, been used for this purpose, is quite decisive. This is the case with Ps. cxxi., which, according to ver. 1, was designed to be sung in view of the mountains of Jerusalem, and is manifestly an evening song for the sacred band of pilgrims, to be sung in the last night-watch, the figures of which are also peculiarly suitable for a pilgrim-song; and with Ps. cxxii., which, according to the express announcement in the introduction, was sung when the sacred pilgrim trains had reached the gates of Jerusalem, and halted for the purpose of

forming in order for the solemn procession into the sanctuary, Ps. cxxxiv. Besides this, we may add *finally*, that according to this interpretation, all the common peculiarities of these psalms are easily accounted for. The simplicity, the want of the parallelism, the artless way of forming a transition by a word retained from the preceding verse, the brevity, all these are peculiarities of sacred popular and pilgrim song.

The objections which have been urged against this interpretation are insignificant. Thus it has been said that it is scarcely possible to conceive that such mournful songs as are these psalms to some extent, could have been sung in the course of the joyful journeys to Jerusalem. Just as if the tone of these festival journeys would not be entirely dependent upon the then existing condition of the people! No one will deny that the nameless psalms truly emanated from the innermost feelings of the people at the time when they were originally composed; and the people could at that time find in them only a representation of their own state. Next, it is objected that several of these psalms contain no reference to such a special occasion. But such a reference was not in every case necessary; the contents might be general, and the indicating of the purpose of the psalms might be attended to only in the form and appearance which they were made to assume; and this is really the case.

The practice of travelling to Jerusalem at the festivals had already taken deep root even in the days of David and Solomon. We see this clearly from the conduct of Jeroboam in 1 Ki. xii. 28, comp. also at Ps. cxxii. It was hence very natural that David, who employed his gift of sacred song in ministering to all the wants of the people of God, should attend to this matter also, and that Solomon should continue the work. The pilgrimages suffered grievous interruption from the separation of the ten tribes; and it was only in the days of the new colony that they regained their ancient importance. In these days a third pilgrim poet arose to take his place alongside of the two ancient ones, who wrought up his own productions along with those of his predecessors into one well-arranged whole, a pilgrim-book.

The whole is grouped around Ps. cxxvii., which was composed by Solomon, who stands in middle between the first and the last of the pilgrim-poets. On both sides there stands a heptade of pilgrim-songs, consisting of two psalms composed by David, and five new ones, which have no name. The seven is divided both times by the four and the three. Each heptade contains the name of Jehovah twenty-four times; each of the connected groups, Ps. cxx.–cxxiii., cxxiv.–cxxvi., cxxviii.–cxxxi., cxxxii.–cxxxiv., twelve times; this cannot be accidental, and it renders it evident that the collector of the whole must be identical with the author of the nameless psalms.—*Hengstenberg.*

Ewald sees in the foresaid fifteen psalms, songs which were sung on the return journey of the Israelites from Babylon. The plural *ma'aloth* would have to be explained in this way, that there were several journeys of the exiles. Against this explanation it cannot be objected that Ps. cxxii. cxxiv. cxxxi. bear the name of David, Ps. cxxvii. the name of Solomon. For certainly older songs also might be assigned for the object named. But perhaps it is against Ewald's hypothesis, that the contents of the psalms are not suitable for that purpose—least of all the contents of Ps. cxxii., where Jerusalem is presupposed as a city again built with palaces. The correct view will be, that *ma'aloth* signifies the regular *pilgrimages* to Jerusalem; and we accordingly have here a collection of songs for the pilgrims of Zion. To this view several things point in these psalms. For example, Ps. cxxi. is evidently a journey-song. Ps. cxxii. begins: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem," &c. It is true some of these psalms have a more general import, inasmuch as they have for their subject Israel's distress, the consolation which Israel draws from the divine promise, and the like. But to sing of these things suited right well for those who were on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.—*Oehler.*

PSALM CXX.

3, 4. *What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?* &c. This passage admits of two interpretations. Some scholars read the whole as an address to the slanderer: "What shall a deceitful tongue give to thee, and what shall it

profit thee? No doubt your calumnies are sharp as arrows of the mighty warrior, and they burn as long as coals of juniper. Well, but what benefit do they confer upon you?" This is an excellent meaning. It is a fair question to a person who carries on such a vile trade. What will you gain by attacking the righteous? Will you increase your own happiness by cherishing malice? Will it promote your pecuniary interests? Will it make you more loved and honoured in the relations of social life? Will it prepare you for acceptance with the Judge, when all nations shall assemble before his tribunal, to give an account of their doings? Can you ever succeed in carrying out your nefarious designs against the man who is clothed from head to foot in armour of heavenly temper? No. Sharp and burning may be the arrows, strong may be the arm, and true may be the eye; but the fiery darts fall back harmless from the shield of faith, and lie cold upon the ground. The enemies of David could not deprive him of the high honours bestowed upon him by God; and humiliated and defeated, the question might be applied to them with marvellous point: What good had you from your lip of falsehood and your tongue of deceit?

We prefer, however, reading the passage as it stands in the authorized version. In this case the third verse inquires of the calumniator what penalty shall be inflicted upon him. "What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, false tongue?" The fourth verse supplies the answer: "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution. The evil we had prepared for others is afterwards applied to our own lips. He who sows serpents' teeth need not look for a joyous harvest. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."—*M'Michael.*

PSALM CXXI.

The idea is a very probable one, that the psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long wished-for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this case we obtain a suitable connection with the following psalm, which would be sung *one* station further on, when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. In this case we find an explanation of the fact, that in the middle point of the psalm there stands the Lord as the *keeper* of Israel, with reference to the declaration, "I keep thee," which was addressed to the patriarch as he slept on his pilgrimage; and in this case also "he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth," is seen in its true light.—*Hengstenberg.*

In reading this psalm one has a feeling that it is the evening song of the pilgrims as they go up to Jerusalem from their various districts, "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." The day's journey is over, and they have reached that high land where the Holy City first bursts upon their view, with that glorious temple in the midst, its pure marble shining like a huge mountain of snow. Before the wearied pilgrims compose themselves to rest, they unite in declaring their trust in the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The psalm is sung, and it rises upward and upward, until it enters the ear of Him who is the hearer of prayer, and who, of all temples, prefers the humble and contrite heart. They lie down in the open air, the stars rush out one by one, as if to keep sentry over them, and soon all is still.—*M'Michael.*

3. *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.* That great eye never closes. That great eye is as bright and piercing as ever, and not for a single instant is the vigilance relaxed. A poor woman, as the eastern story has it, came to the sultan one day and asked compensation for the loss of some property. "How did you lose it?" said the monarch. "I fell asleep," was the reply, "and a robber entered my dwelling." "Why did you fall asleep?" "I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake." The sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep, is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the divine government. We can sleep in safety because our God is ever awake. We are safe, because he never slumbers. Jacob had a beautiful picture of the ceaseless care of divine providence on the night when

he fled from his father's house. The lonely traveller slept on the ground, with the stones for his pillow and the sky for his canopy. He had a wondrous vision of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, on which angels were seen ascending and descending. And he heard Jehovah saying to him, "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—*M'Michael.*

PSALM CXXII.

An introduction of two verses stands instead of a *title*, announcing the object of the psalm. The preceding psalm was intended to be sung in sight of Jerusalem, and this one at the gates of the city, where the pilgrim train had halted for the purpose of arranging the solemn procession to the sanctuary. . . . The title attributes the psalm to David as its author; and internal evidence confirms it. The design of the psalm can only be explained in connection with the times of David. Its design is to conciliate the affections of the people for the new capital; to procure for it that place in their feelings which it occupied externally. Ver. 3 takes for granted that Jerusalem had recently, for the first time, become a beautifully built city; and this was the case in David's time. At all events, the description of Jerusalem, as a city beautifully built, well compacted, adorned with palaces, and fortified, *here* and in ver. 7, points to a time before the captivity. . . .

The reasons which have been adduced against the Davidic origin of the psalm are of no force. The assertion that ver. 2 is not applicable to David, but only to the pilgrims who approached the city from without, is set aside by the remark, that David here, as he frequently did (for example Ps. xx. xxi.), sung from the soul of the people. The mention of the *house of the Lord*, in ver. 1 and 9, does not lead to the time after the building of Solomon's temple, for it is undeniable that even the early sanctuary was known by this name; comp. Ps. v. 7; xxvii. 4; lv. 14; and at Ps. lii. 8. The assertion that pilgrimages to Jerusalem did not come into general use till some time after the reign of David, when uniformity of public worship had been completely established, depends upon the idea, which is not at all borne out by history, that the directions contained in the Pentateuch, as to there being only one sanctuary, were not observed till a later age. It has been proved in the treatise on the Pentateuch and the time of the judges, in vol. iii. of the *Beitr.*, that, during the whole period of the judges, the people had only one sanctuary, and that to it were brought the sacrifices of the whole nation, and that the great festivals, especially the passover, were celebrated in accordance with the directions of the law, Ex. xxiii. 15–17; xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 16. That the sanctuary in Jerusalem, under David, did in reality come exactly into the place of the earlier one at Shiloh, is clear from the fact, that the ark of the covenant was there, "the heart of the Israelitish religion," and, indeed, the ark of the covenant rising from its grave (comp. *Beitr.* p. 48, ss.), as intimated by the circumstance, that, as soon as it was consecrated, sacrifices *were offered* before it (2 Sam. vi. 5, 13). The matter finally is put beyond a doubt by the psalms of David's age, for they speak only of *one* sanctuary, the sanctuary at Jerusalem (comp. at Ps. xv. 1). The old tabernacle, indeed, at Gibeon, still continued to exist, but only as a ruin. David did not act like the breakers of images; he respected externally the attachments of the people, but with happy effect he did everything he could to turn the regard of the people more and more towards Jerusalem: and the psalm before us, along with others, served this object—its design being to awaken love, devout love, for Jerusalem and its sanctuary. There are, besides, distinct traces of solemn processions to the sanctuary in the time of David, Ps. xlii. 4; lv. 14.—The mention of the *house* of David cannot seem strange. David had founded a *new house* instead of the *house of Saul*, 2 Sam. iii. 1. Even before the promise which he received through Nathan, he hoped and wished that he would continue to reign in his posterity (comp. at Ps. xxi. 4; cxxxviii. 3), and after that promise he always looked upon himself as the founder of a family which was to last for ever, for example, Ps. xviii. 20.—Finally, the assertion that the language is that of a *later* age has no further foundation to rest on than the ש occurring twice instead of אשר. This form, however, occurs in a much older song, that of Deborah; and in the present instance it need occasion very little difficulty, occurring, as it

does, in a *popular* song, which consists of the language of ordinary life, and may be expected to contain forms which would afterwards appear in written language.

As far as concerns the time of composition, the psalm takes for granted that Jerusalem had already become the ecclesiastical and civil capital. It cannot, therefore, have been composed before 2 Sam. vi.; but it must have been composed shortly after that period, as its design is to render popular the new institution, to endear to the affections of the people the city "which was the bond of sacred union."—*Hengstenberg.*

4. *Whither the tribes go up.* The church is still the centre of union. To this sacred place the tribes of God are ever going up, in accordance with the divine statute, "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." All local peculiarities, all national distinctions, vanish in the house of God. The Asiatic and the Esquimaux, the Red Indian and the islander of the Southern Ocean, the African and the European, assemble here as one family; and throwing aside all sectional feuds and rivalries, they worship on the same holy mountain. The great bond of union is Christ, and, joined to Him who is our living Head, we are members of one another. All one in Christ. There is one Father, one Redeemer, one Holy Ghost. There is one condemnation, and there is one redemption; one cross of atonement, one throne of grace, one home in heaven. Wherever believers meet, they can sing the same psalms, and repeat the same prayers. The house of God disowns all the distinctions of earth: "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." Religion forms the great uniting principle, while sin is the source of all disorder. Love to man has its deepest roots in love to God; and we anticipate that bright millennial period when "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," and all nations shall flow into it, and meet there as friends and brothers, members of the Holy Catholic Church. Pray and labour; and urge forward the chariot-wheels of the Redeemer. — *Pilgrim Psalms.*

6. *They shall prosper that love thee.* A consuming zeal for the house of God is common to all the psalms. So many of them are either lamentations over the reverses of Zion or songs of thanksgiving because of her prosperity, and so distinctly do they thus reflect her contemporary fortunes, that the careful student of the national history finds little difficulty in affixing to many of them the date at which they were composed and first sung. One consequence is, that God has thus provided songs adapted to every variety of condition in which the church can be placed. Another scarcely less important is, that the faithful are admonished to raise themselves out of that selfish isolation,—that entire absorption in the concerns of their own personal well-being,—into which even good men are apt to fall. I believe that the lesson just named is one which very many God-fearing people have sadly failed to lay to heart. They can sing that half of the Psalter which expresses the various exercises of *personal* piety; but the other half, which summons them *to remember Zion*, calls forth little of warm sympathy from their hearts. Even in the interest of personal piety itself, this is to be lamented. Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends: and it has many a time been found that believers who before were troubled with weakness and perpetual fears, have been lifted up into a higher and brighter and serener region, when, looking no more on their own things only, they have become absorbed in labours and prayers in behalf of some grand Christian enterprise. The Lord will not fail to "remember his Davids and all their afflictions,"—their anxious labours for his house and kingdom. David's own faith in this matter was strong; and here he encourages God's people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, by reminding them that "they shall prosper that love her."—*Binnie.*

A reason is here assigned why we should pray for the peace and prosperity of the church. Our own interest has an inseparable connection with it. Worldly prosperity cannot indeed be affirmed of all the true Israel; though our Saviour's declaration still preserves its value: 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." But one thing can be promised with infallible certainty, that the friends of Zion shall enjoy much spiritual prosperity. To a certain extent the benefit is theirs already. It is an

excellent evidence of advancement in the divine life, when we love the house of God, pray for its peace, and labour for its welfare. And the more ardent our aspirations, and the more unremitting our exertions, the greater happiness we shall experience, and the more clearly shall we read our title to an inheritance in heaven. The best and speediest mode of promoting our own spiritual prosperity, is just to engage with heart and hand in every cause which is identified with the glory of the eternal God, and the eternal welfare of man. Indolent Christians have very little joy in the Lord. They are melancholy, moping, and discontented; and it is proper they should remain in darkness until they find out what is wrong, and take an active part in schemes of benevolence. The happy Christians are the working Christians. Make the experiment if you have not done so before; and you will soon learn how true it is, They shall prosper that love Zion.—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm is either the sigh of the exile, towards the close of the captivity, looking in faith and patience for the deliverance which he had reason to hope was now nigh at hand; or it is the sigh of those who, having already returned to their native land, were still exposed to the "scorn and contempt" of the Samaritans and others, who, favoured by the Persian government, took every opportunity of harassing and insulting the Jews. Comp. Neh. ii. 19, "They laughed us to scorn, and despised us," with ver. 4 of the psalm, "The scorn of them that are at ease, the contempt of the proud."—*Perowne.*

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.* Be thankful that they can use no other weapons than calumny and contempt. The Jews had to contend at the same time with open violence. Were their power equal to their will, they would confiscate your property, they would confine you in dungeons, they would burn you at the stake. In Athens they would have condemned Socrates, the greatest and best philosopher of antiquity, to drink the cup of hemlock; and they would have banished Aristides, because they were tired of hearing every one call him Aristides the Just. In Jerusalem they would have goaded on the senseless rabble, and swelled the ferocious shout, Not this man, but Barabbas! In St. Andrews they would have sat at the castle windows, and feasted their eyes when good Patrick Hamilton was consuming in the flames; and they would have gone in afterwards and dined with an unimpeachable appetite. In slave countries they would tar and feather the missionaries who proclaim to the degraded negroes the unsearchable riches of Christ. The same Satanic spirit still reigns; and can we be too grateful that these enemies of the cross are kept in chains! We live in a land of civil and religious freedom; and they cannot go beyond the boundaries of misrepresentation and scorn. They may show their teeth and growl, but they cannot bite. They may curse you, but they cannot lay a finger upon you. They may hiss at you, but what is that compared with the rattlesnake springing upon you, embracing you with his slimy folds, fastening his fangs in your flesh, and changing you in a few hours into a hideous and bloated corpse! How can we value enough the privileges of Christians in this dear land of our fathers, where Freedom has built her home! "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it."—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXIV.

It is impossible for us to realize the circumstances of these persons. We know not the danger. We know not the deliverance. We know not the gratitude. Ours is indeed a blessed ignorance; but one effect of this ignorance is, that we have not a sufficient sympathy with the victims of persecution. Enjoying the blessings of religious freedom, worshipping God in our churches without distraction of spirit, how can we appreciate the condition of those pious men who were hunted as partridges on the mountains, and whose lives were placed in perpetual peril, on account of their attachment to truth! Our ancestors understood these things much better than we do. And a few months' persecution would give us a much more accurate and vivid idea of the hardships which they endured than a whole volume of eloquent description. What true men, with all their failings, were those covenanting fathers of ours! They sacrificed all that was dear to flesh

and blood rather than renounce that liberty of public worship which is the inalienable birthright of the church, and which is independent of human laws, because superior to them all. Conceive them seated on a hillside in the midst of a wild moor, and just escaped from the soldiers of Claverhouse, a man ferocious as any beast of prey, and merciless as any flood of waters; and with what thrilling emotions would this psalm be sung!

"Had not the Lord been on our side,
May Israel now say;
Had not the Lord been on our side,
When men rose us to slay."

—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXV.

This psalm was composed after the Babylonish captivity. It refers to the troublous times of Nehemiah. The rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem had commenced, but the work was carried on under most discouraging circumstances. The inveterate opposition of the Samaritans has been frequently noticed. They maligned the Jewish builders at the Persian court; and, in concert with their heathen neighbours, they had recourse to open violence. The builders were under the necessity of working with a sword at their side, so that when the trumpet sounded they might at once repair to the place where an attack was made, and with flashing weapons repel their adversaries. But with all these precautions, the poor and persecuted Hebrew colony, endeavouring to build the temple of their God and the city of their fathers, would assuredly have been destroyed had there been no gracious interposition of Heaven. Their condition may be described with singular fidelity and power in the words of the preceding psalm. If the Lord had not been on their side, their enemies would have swallowed them up alive.

The church here declares her trust in God in all time of tribulation. He would prove her friend, and that too at no distant period. And to make the divine promises visible, as it were, to the eye of sense, the illustrations are selected from the mountain scenery of Jerusalem. One may readily imagine with what thrilling sensations this sacred ode would be sung by the pious Jews. Hope fires their bosom, the blood rushes in rapid tides through their veins, fresh strength is acquired for endurance and labour, and their voices become louder and more jubilant, as, with eyes fixed upon the guardian mountains of the holy city, they sing: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever."—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXVI.

The first colony of exiles had returned to Palestine. The permission to return had been so unexpected, the circumstances which had led to it so wonderful and so unforeseen, that when it came it could hardly be believed. To those who found themselves actually restored to the land of their fathers it seemed like a dream. It was a joy beyond all words to utter. God, their fathers' God, had indeed wrought for them, and even the heathen had recognized his hand.

It is with these thoughts that this beautiful psalm opens. But, after all, what was that little band of settlers which formed the first caravan? It was but as the trickling of a tiny rill in some desert waste. Hence the prayer bursts from the lip of the psalmist, Bring back our captives like mighty streams, which, swollen by the wintry rains, descend to fertilize the parched and desolate wilderness. Then comes the thought of the many discouragements and opposition which the first settlers had to encounter; it was a time of sowing in tears (Ezra iv. 11–24). Still faith could expect a joyful harvest. He who had restored them to the land would assuredly crown his work with blessing.—*Perowne.*

PSALM CXXVII.

Two psalms bear Solomon's name. One of these is the hundred and twenty-seventh. . . . Some recent critics throw doubt on the trustworthiness of the superscription. But most people will judge that this must be in virtue of some foregone conclusion, and will agree with Luther, Calvin, and the generality of the older commentators, in thinking that the psalm is so exactly in the manner of the wise author of the Proverbs, that we need not hesitate to attribute it to his pen. It is the lyrical expression of thoughts which run through the "dark sayings" of that book. The first part of it, for instance, is a beautiful

reproduction of Prov. x. 22: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it;" and the correspondence is still closer if we translate the latter clause, as many do, "And sorrowful toil addeth nothing to it." Familiar as the proverb has become in the speech of every Christian nation, the psalm is yet more familiar. From it the pious builders of a former generation borrowed the NISI DOMINUS FRUSTRA, which may be read on the lintels of houses in our older streets. An admirable confession of faith to be made by any man who is called to be a builder in church or commonwealth! It is the Lord's blessing that builds the house and keeps the town; that fills the house with the stir of children, and peoples the town with valiant sons, who, with unabashed brow, will speak with the enemies in the gate.—*Binnie.*

2. *For so he giveth his beloved sleep.* Even so he giveth (it) to his beloved in sleep. EVEN (SO), nearly equivalent to "the very self-same thing." *He giveth (it), i.e.* bread, the necessaries of life, *in sleep.* What others obtain only with such wearing toil, such constant effort, with so much disappointment and so much sorrow, God gives to the man whom he loves, as it were *while he sleeps, i.e.* without all this anxiety and exertion. This is the interpretation now perhaps commonly adopted, but it seems to me very questionable (though I accepted it in the first edition), for the following reasons:—(1), It is necessary to supply "bread," not "bread of sorrows," in this clause; and (2), I am not satisfied that the rendering of the accusative "*in sleep*" is justifiable. . . . I am inclined, therefore, to prefer the rendering, "So he giveth his beloved sleep," though it is no doubt difficult to explain the reference of the particle "so." I suppose it refers to the principle laid down in the previous verses, there being a tacit comparison, "as all labour is vain without God's providence, so he gives the man who loves him and leaves all in his hands, calm refreshing sleep."

There is no discouragement here, it is needless to say, to honest labour. It is undue anxiety, a feverish straining, a toiling, as if toil of itself could command success, the folly of which is condemned. Compare for a similar sentiment Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and toil can add nothing thereto." The teaching is that of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, Mat. vi. 25–34; see Lu. x. 41; 1 Pe. v. 7. God's beloved are not exempted from the great law of labour which lies upon all, but the sting is taken from it when they can leave all results in a Father's hand, with absolute trust in his wisdom and goodness.—*Perowne.*

The last clause of the verse may be thus rendered: He giveth his beloved in sleep. What other men are anxiously toiling for, day and night, the pious receive from God while they are sleeping. We prefer this translation. It is more in harmony with the leading principle of the psalm. And there seems, moreover, a marked allusion to Solomon himself. Solomon was called Jedidiah, which signifies the beloved of the Lord; and it was during sleep that the divine blessing was conferred. He had asked for wisdom alone, and God said, "And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days." The thought thus modified is extremely beautiful. God is working for his people even when they are asleep. The men of the world are toiling and struggling, labouring night and day, as if they were slaves, and with what pitiable results! But Jehovah showers rich benedictions on his beloved ones in sleep. They act to the best of their judgment; they labour without distraction of spirit; and they leave the issues in the hands of Him from whom comes down every good and every perfect gift. They lie down with a feeling of security; and while their senses are steeped in forgetfulness, and the calm slumbers are recruiting their strength for the duties of another day, God is working for them all the time, and is blessing the fruits of their honest industry. A general of Athens was uncommonly successful in several engagements. A painter who supposed that these successes were more owing to good fortune than to his abilities, represented him as sound asleep under a tree, while the goddess of liberty was twining the laurels around his brow. And so the good man sleeps: but the Shepherd of Israel sleeps not. His eye is upon him every moment; his hand is working for him all the night long as well as during the day, and crowning his efforts with success. Beyond all contradiction, he giveth his beloved in sleep.—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord*, &c. The psalmist's description is a very bright one (in Ps. cxxviii. namely). But there is another side to the picture. Domestic life has its share of the sorrows and anxieties that belong to this sin-stricken world. The birth of children not seldom is itself the occasion of anxiety: for how are they to be fed and clothed? Another family song has been provided to meet this case. Ps. cxxvii. is the complement of Ps. cxxviii. . . . Children are the Lord's gift; and parents may trust in him that, if they do their duty, he who sends mouths will send meat to fill them. Prudent industry ought not to be suffered to degenerate into unbelieving anxiety about the future.

These domestic psalms caused sore perplexity to the early fathers. For the notion already referred to, that conjugal life is essentially earthly in its spirit and incompatible with a high style of godliness, early came to prevail, and engendered that false and dangerous estimation of celibacy which ultimately brought forth its fruit in the monastic institutions of the Greek and Latin churches. Even Chrysostom and Augustine were not superior to this weakness. The latter divine, in expounding the psalms before us, explains away the obvious and natural sense of the words, and turns them into an allegory. The *wife* is the church;—for is not the spouse of Christ a vine from Egypt—a fruitful vine? The *olive plants* are the children of Zion: and so forth. Much can be said, no doubt, in extenuation of the error of these great men. It was an error, nevertheless, and wrought much mischief. Of the many services which the world owes to the reformers, not the least valuable was their reinstating of the family in its long-forgotten honours. Luther, in particular, vindicated the truth of God on this subject with incomparable power. His marriage was intended to be a protest against the doctrine which attributed a peculiar sanctity to single life, and a solemn declaration of his belief that the wedded life of Christians is holy; and the testimony was not thrown away. Of the four bass-reliefs that adorn the great Luther Monument just erected at Worms, one perpetuates the memory of the day on which the reformer gave his hand to Catherine von Bora, and expresses the sense entertained by the German nation of the value of the example which he then set to his countrymen and to all Christendom. It deserves to be mentioned that Luther's high estimate of the dignity of the family was mightily fortified by the psalms, especially by the two which we have quoted. He wrote separate commentaries on them, in which he did ample justice to their natural and obvious sense. Thus men's minds were opened to perceive that the monastic idea of a religious life is a very different one indeed from that of the holy prophets and psalmists.—*Binnie.*

PSALM CXXVIII.

See under Psalm cxxvii.

PSALM CXXIX.

The psalm suits perfectly well to the time to which all the nameless pilgrim-songs belong, the period after the return from the exile. At that time the experience related in ver. 1–4 was far richer than formerly; the youth of the people, according to ver. 1 and 2, was long past and gone; and the intermediate position between the deliverance already obtained and the still existing oppression corresponds exactly to the situation of Israel at the period in question. Still it were too much to affirm that the psalm, viewed merely by itself, must of necessity belong to this period.—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM CXXX.

When Luther, in the year 1530, was in the fortress of Coburg, on four occasions during the night there seemed to pass before his eyes burning torches, and this was followed by a severe headache. One night he saw three blazing torches come in at the window of his room, and he swooned away. His servant, coming to his assistance, poured oil of almonds into his ear, and rubbed his feet with hot napkins. As soon as he recovered he bade him read to him a portion of the Epistle to the Galatians, and during the reading fell asleep. The danger was over, and when he awoke he cried out joyfully, "Come, to spite the devil, let us sing the psalm, *De profundis*, in four parts."

Being asked on one occasion which were the best psalms, he replied, "The Pauline psalms," and being pressed to say which they were, he answered: "The 32d, the 51st, the 130th, and the 143d. For they teach us that the forgiveness of sins is vouchsafed to them

that believe without the law and without works; therefore they are Pauline psalms; and when David sings, 'With thee is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared,' so Paul likewise saith, 'God hath concluded all under sin, that he may have mercy on all.' Therefore none can boast of his own righteousness, but the words, 'That thou mayest be feared,' thrust away all self-merit, teach us to take off our hat before God and confess, *gratia est, non meritum, remissio non satisfactio*—it is all forgiveness, and no merit."—*Delitzsch in "Perowne."*

What is the great object to be accomplished by this remission of sin? It is the creation of piety. "That thou mayest be feared." This fear, being the result of pardon, cannot be the fear of punishment. . . . It is the reverence which a loving child has to a kind father: it is the reverence which is formed in the soul of the pardoned sinner as he contemplates the holy character of that God who has forgiven him, and muses upon that tremendous sacrifice through which his redemption has been achieved. . . .

The principle here laid down is a simple one. There is no true piety, there is no sacred fear of God, there is no genuine worship, there is no loving obedience until the pardon has been granted. We must ever begin with the remission of sins. The idea of the divine justice, viewed apart from the divine mercy, inspires the criminal with terror, and fills him with still deeper hatred against God. It is only when the sinner views God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, that he is attracted towards him, melts in submission, and acquires a sacred fear of offending him. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? You must first convince me that God loves me before I can love him. You must first convince me that he is willing to pardon me before I can solicit his forgiveness. You must first convince me that he has removed from me this awful load of guilt, and will never place it on again, before I can serve him with a free and cheerful heart. You must first convince me that he has adopted me into his family before I can give him the affection and the obedience of a son. . . . First forgiveness, then fear: first pardon, then piety: first justification, then sanctification: first the heart, then the life: first make the tree good, and then you will get good fruit. This is the divine plan, and nothing can be conceived more rational. But sin has introduced such disorder into the mental faculties that men do not perceive the gospel to be the manifold wisdom of God; and they turn away from it with a kind of instinctive abhorrence. Hence all perversions of the gospel reverse the divine order, and insist upon placing the effect before the cause. . . . It is just because men will not accept the simple, unencumbered, philosophical plan of God, that so many and such fatal mistakes are committed in religion. . . . "We love him, because he first loved us." "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them, and rose again."—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXXI.

This very pleasant ode is in the title ascribed to David, and furnishes one of the instances in which the testimony of the titles is summarily rejected by many recent critics. Having, first of all, made up their minds that there are no psalms of David so far on in the Psalter, they either, like Dr. Hupfeld, set aside the testimony of the title as "unworthy of refutation," or at best they explain it away as meaning no more than that this is a psalm written "after David's manner." This latter explanation is adopted by Dr. Delitzsch, who, however, admits that the sentiments of the psalm agree perfectly with all we know of David. The truth is, that the grounds on which the testimony of the inscription has, in this instance, been set aside, are fitted to confirm the impression that the scepticism with which these have come to be regarded cannot be justified. Dr. Delitzsch is undoubtedly in the right when he says that "David was a pattern of the sentiment expressed in this psalm," and that "resignation to God's guidance, submission to his dispensations, contentment with whatsoever he was pleased to mete out, were among the essential features of his noble character." By some of his many critics the royal prophet has been accused of ambition, and it is by no means unlikely that his youth showed some blossomings

of that proud flower—the "last infirmity of noble minds." The sharpness with which his brothers accused him of pride, when they saw his valour roused by the disdainful challenge of the Philistine, would seem to indicate that the family at Bethlehem had observed in him aspirations and powers which looked beyond the tending of Jesse's flocks. But if ambitious thoughts found entrance into his mind, they were not cherished, or permitted to betray him into the measures characteristic of ambitious men. In all the brilliant company of gifted men who have risen from a low rank to sit amongst the mighty—the princes, statesmen, warriors of the world, it would be hard to point out a single individual who could have sung Ps. cxxxi. with such perfect truth and fitness as the son of Jesse.—*Binnie.*

2. *As a child that is weaned of his mother.* The child here introduced is a weaned child, but not one that is newly weaned. A child that has just been weaned is restless and impatient; and it still longs for its natural nourishment. But this child is quiet and contented; and it lies upon its mother's lap without any pining regrets. Thus understood, the comparison is beautiful and appropriate. David had no desire for worldly distinctions. Girt as he was with pomp and power, they had lost their attractive influence. He was as much weaned from them as a child who has no longer any relish for its former food, and is entirely resigned to the maternal care. The man of sublime genius, the victor in many a battle-field, the crowned king of Israel was meek and lowly as a little child. "My soul is even as a weaned child."

Surely this was a foreshadowing of the truth taught a thousand years afterwards by the Great Teacher himself. The child is the highest type of the Christian. "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." It is as if he had said to the apostles: Your bosoms are panting after the high honours that await you when my kingdom is established on the earth. So eager is your craving for personal aggrandizement, that you are quarrelling even now among yourselves as to the superior places. But let me tell you, that unless this ambitious disposition be changed, and you become humble as little children, you will not get into the kingdom at all. Look at this child. Make him your pattern: be as he is: and you will be the greatest in my church. What an idea of true greatness! The child is the greatest among us all, and the greatest because unconscious of it. Heaven lies around us in our infancy. That child has but lately come from God; and, in his innocent looks and words, there beams forth a divine glory, which may put us all to shame. Pride has no existence in the bosom of a child. If there, it has been put there by its parents, who should know better. He is ignorant of all the distinctions of earth, and cares nothing about them. He has also boundless trust in a parent's love; and the thought of to-morrow leaves no dark unrest upon his soul. His is a contentment surpassing all wealth. And so, Christian parent, when that little child of yours is seated on your knees, filling your eyes with a joyous light; and when he looks up so lovingly in your face, and feels he has no want so long as he is beside you, do not be ashamed of taking from him a lesson of spiritual profit. Let the little prattler preach you a powerful sermon on the greatness of humility. May it be the chief wish of your heart to be strong in faith as he is, and to have the same confidence in your heavenly Father which he has in you.—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXXII.

As Ps. xxiv. was composed by David to be sung at the bringing up of the ark to the tabernacle on Mount Zion, so Ps. cxxxii. was composed by Solomon, or by some Levitical psalmist in concert with him, to be sung when the ark was borne into its final resting-place within the golden chamber of the temple. Solomon's prayer on the occasion, as it is reported in the Chronicles, concludes with petitions that constitute the burden of the psalm, "Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant," 2 Chr. vi. 41, 42. I do not forget that some, like our venerable translators, judge

the psalm to have been written by David for a "prayer at the removing of the ark," and suppose that it is he who here "commendeth unto God the religious care he had for the ark;" nor do I forget that other critics connect the psalm with the consecration of the second temple. But neither supposition corresponds perfectly to the tenor of the psalm. God did not say of David's new tabernacle, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell:" and as for the second temple, we know indeed that its builders might well have prayed, like Solomon, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest," but they could not have added, "Thou and the ark of thy strength;" for the ark never entered that second house. Moreover, is it not most natural to suppose that it was Solomon, and the Levites his contemporaries, the men who had been eye-witnesses of the late king's solicitude about the erection of a fit dwelling-place for the God of Jacob, that gave utterance to the affectionate reminiscence with which the psalm opens?—*Binnie.*

Some suppose that this psalm was composed by David. The arguments in favour of Solomon have more weight. "The whole tenor of this psalm," says Jebb, "is an exact epitome of the dedication prayer of Solomon (2 Chr. vi.) The topics are the same,—the building the house of the Lord—the promise to David—the inhabitation of the Almighty; and the concluding sentences of the dedication are identical with the expressions of the psalm in ver. 8–10. There can therefore be little question that this psalm was composed by Solomon." If this opinion be correct, it is almost certain that it was sung by the congregated multitudes when the ark was removed from the tabernacle in Mount Zion to the magnificent temple on Mount Moriah. It was a season of solemn joy, the greatest that had ever occurred in their national history. There was a similar use of it beyond all question at the dedication of the second temple of Ezra. The psalm is thus rich in historical associations; and frequently has it been sung by the church, when the dark clouds rolled away, and the face of God beamed again with favour, as it did in the days of old.—*Pilgrim Psalms.*

PSALM CXXXIII.

When the whole house of Israel chose David for their king, and the throne was established at Jerusalem, the new capital, he lost no time in bringing up the ark from Kirjath-jearim, and restoring the tabernacle service with more than its ancient splendour. And these great events were accompanied with a gush of sacred melody. They constituted the most memorable epoch in the history of the Hebrew church, between the exodus from Egypt and the incarnation of Christ. Accordingly the songs belonging to this period are of a peculiarly lofty and joyful character. How does the psalmist exult in the re-union of the whole house of Israel, in Ps. cxxxiii.; a song which has, times without number, enabled God's people to give tuneful utterance to the grateful feelings of their hearts when "the Lord has built up Jerusalem, and gathered together the dispersed of Israel."—*Binnie.*

PSALM CXXXIV.

The outline of the psalm may be given thus: the pilgrim-bands present themselves on the evening of their arrival at the temple, and call upon the servants of the Lord, who were there at the time of the evening sacrifice, to praise the Lord in their name and that of the people, and to pray to him. Coming with such a state of mind, they could not remain long without the blessing, therefore the priests answered them by pronouncing that. Such a psalm was most fitly appropriated as the close of the whole pilgrim-book; so that the collector of it, who was at the same time the author of all the nameless pilgrim-songs, undoubtedly placed this psalm purposely at the end, or composed it with a view to its forming the conclusion of the whole. So already Lampe: forte ille, qui fasciculum canticorum graduum collegit—hoc canticum tanquam aptum epilogum addidit.—*Heng.*

3. *The Lord . . . bless thee out of Zion.* It is God, not as the Maker of heaven and earth, but as dwelling in Zion, that informs us how sin can be pardoned, and man be recovered from the wrecks and ruins of the fall. We honour God as the Creator and Preserver of all things: we admire the power, and the wisdom, and the benevolence which are everywhere conspicuous in the work of his hands: we see his glory, as it shines forth from every flower under our feet, and sparkles from every star over our heads. But in all these manifestations of divine grandeur something is still

wanting. They cannot meet the necessities of the soul: they cannot warm into life the chilled heart, and exchange the moans of misery for the voices of joy: they cannot purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God: they can throw no light into the darkness of the sepulchre: they cannot deliver us from the horrors of an unending perdition. In the church alone the grand problem is solved, the mighty secret is disclosed, how God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly! We turn to Calvary; and there, on that rugged cross, and amidst the rending rocks and the heaving earth, and under the blackened heavens and with these dying groans of the innocent Sufferer falling on our ears, we perceive a demonstration of divine love, and divine wisdom, and divine holiness, and divine power which transcends every illustration of the character of God that appears in the works of creation and providence. "Herein is love" (as if divine love were seen nowhere else), "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The gospel is the richest joy that ever came down from heaven to earth. The Lord who dwells in Zion reveals himself as a Father, whose children have wandered from him; but who desires, above all things, that they would return to his embrace, and possess his favour as in days of old before sin introduced discord and sorrow. We may thus approach him with perfect confidence, assured that, unworthy as we are, he will make us welcome for the sake of him whose blood cleanses from all sin. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." My impenitent readers, will you not all put him to the proof and take him at his own word? He will bless you: he can bless you. And if he blesses you, who can curse you? If he justifies you, who can condemn? If he grants you grace, who can take it away? If he makes you rich, who can make you poor? If he promises you eternal life, and gives you a foretaste of it on earth, will he not redeem his pledge in heaven? Make immediate application for the bestowment of these blessings. Dream not of fitness. Talk not of preparation. They are all yours by a deed of gift, whenever you accept them for Christ's sake; and ascribe to him, as is most due, the entire merit of your redemption.

And having thus found God in Zion, and experienced the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, then, when you walk abroad and survey the works of nature, it will seem as if they were invested with new splendour to your spiritual vision. "Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste his works." The sun as he envelops creation in his mantle of light, and makes all things overflow with beauty, and music, and gladness, will remind you of the Sun of Righteousness, rising upon a benighted world and upon a benighted soul with healing under his wings. Each star, as it shoots out from the darkness, will remind you of the Star of Jacob, and of that fair star which directed the wise men of the East to the manger-cradle where the infant Jesus was laid. And when the deep blue heaven is studded with innumerable systems of glory, you can lift up your eyes and view them as the spirit's ladder, by which you may climb to the celestial city of our God; and you may exclaim with holy confidence, This is my home—my Father's house. I shall soon be there!

As one who, long detained on foreign shores,
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather bleach'd and batter'd rocks,
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy toward the happy land;
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordain'd to guide th' embodied spirit home
From toilsome life, to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires,
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infused from heaven, must thither tend.

Pilgrim Psalms.

PSALMS CXXXV. CXXXVI.

The late date of these two psalms may be inferred from the manner in which they are compacted of passages from the earlier portion of the Psalter. In respect of the formal arrangement, the first consists of three strophes of seven verses each, of which the historical strophe, ver. 8–14, stands out by its central position as the most important. The other psalm, although not divided into strophes, is marked by the occurrence in every verse of the well-known refrain "for his mercy endureth for ever," itself borrowed, either immediately or mediately, from Ps. cvi. 1.

The contents of the two psalms are, however, to a great extent the same; and they may therefore be conveniently treated of together. Both set forth the almighty power of God: both contain protests against idolatry: both recount the deliverance of Israel from Egypt: both make special mention of the divine overthrow of Sihon and Og, and of the assignment of their land as an heritage to Israel. A further comparison of both psalms with the solemn confession of sins contained in Neh. ix. will leave little doubt that it was in connection with the national fast therein recorded to have been observed that these psalms were composed. . . .

As the preceding fifteen psalms are historically connected with the rebuilding of the walls of *Jerusalem*, so do the two psalms now before us carry our thoughts back to the re-occupation of the Israelitish *territory*. Their historical starting-point is not indeed the first return from captivity; but rather Nehemiah's assemblage of the whole people that they might be reckoned by genealogy (Neh. vii. 5); that genealogy undoubtedly furnishing in many instances the key to the territorial inheritance to which each family was entitled. . . .

Their joy, however, was not unmingled with regret. They were indeed themselves settled again, according to the former allotment, in the land of their inheritance; but how contracted the limits of the district over which they were spread, when compared with those of the territory originally assigned to them! Samaria was occupied by a hostile race; Galilee too, for the present, was no longer theirs; and the fertile regions to the east of the Jordan, which had been so triumphantly won from Sihon the Amorite, conqueror of Moab, and from Og, the last of the old giant race, chieftains whose renown had made the story of their defeat one of the most attractive of the tales of olden Israelitish history, were now, according to all human appearance, almost irretrievably lost.

Under these circumstances the celebration of the ancient conquest of Canaan, while it furnished an appropriate theme of praise to those who were resettled in the land, contained also a stirring appeal to the people's faith. Knowing as they did that the whole land had been promised to Abraham and his seed after him, they must still believe in the perpetuity of the promise; they must look forward to the time when the blessing should be renewed in no measure of diminution; they must still believe that God would yet plead the cause of his people, and repent him concerning his servants. Samaria and Galilee, Bashan and Gilead, must not be given up for lost; the day should yet come when they that sat in darkness should see a great light. Even in former days, God, although he had given all Canaan, with Bashan, for his people's inheritance, had yet at various times suffered the Israelites to fall into the hands of their enemies for their sins; and so at the present season he was permitting the land of their inheritance to yield increase to the kings whom, because of their sins, he had set over them. Yet he had, in the days of the judges, been merciful to them on their repentance; and so even now, if they would return to him and keep his law, he would doubtless again make good to them his promise in all its fulness.

We shall not need to dwell on the spiritual manner in which God is now at last vindicating his faithfulness. To the Church Catholic, the true antitype of the ancient Israel, he has assigned for an inheritance every heathen realm throughout the world; nor ought she to rest content till every one be subjugated to her sway. We celebrate with joy the first triumphs of the gospel through the different quarters of the globe; we may exult in the career of success which in far-off lands is still being granted to it; but meanwhile, along with the Jews in Nehemiah's day, we have to bewail the provinces that we have lost; and those the very provinces, alas! over which the dominion of Christ was earliest asserted. Must the scenes of the first apostolic conquests be for ever abandoned to the darkness of superstition and the bane of misbelief? Must the regions of the East which Greece and Rome once subdued to civilize, and which Christianity in her turn subdued to enlighten, relapse into the semi-barbarism from which we hoped they had been rescued? Will God not yet repent himself concerning his servants and remember us in our low estate?—*Thrupp.*

PSALM CXXXVII.

Ver. 8, 9. *Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee*, &c. See *Appendix* on Ps. lxix. cix.

Examination shows that the imprecations are not the utterance of resentment for private injuries, or of a base desire to see personal enemies laid low. Sometimes, as in the wish expressed for the destruction of Edom and Babylon in Ps. cxxxvii., the objects of the imprecation are the nations which have cruelly wronged the people of God.—*Binnie.*

The principles so ably laid down by the author himself in his introduction and elsewhere, form a sufficient answer to the remark or concession he makes under these verses, to the effect, viz., that the language here savours more of imprecation than forgiveness, and is apparently prompted more by the spirit of revenge than by a desire of just punishment.

Calvin's view of this passage is characterized by his wonted penetration and judgment. We present the reader with it: "The psalmist discerns the coming judgment of God, though not yet apparent, by the eye of faith, as the apostle well calls faith 'the beholding of things not seen.' Incredible as it might appear that any calamity should overtake so mighty an empire as Babylon then was, and impregnable as it was generally considered to be, he sees in the glass of the Word its destruction and overthrow. He calls upon all God's people to do the same, and by faith from the elevation of Heaven's oracles, to despise the pride of that abandoned city. If the divine promises inspire us with hope and confidence, and God's Spirit attemper our afflictions to the rule of his own uprightness, we shall lift up our hands in the lowest depths of affliction to which we may be cast down, and glory in the fact that it is well with us in our worst distresses, and that our enemies are devoted to destruction. In declaring those to be happy who should *pay back vengeance upon the Babylonians*, he does not mean that the service done by the Medes and Persians, in itself, met with the approbation of God; for they were actuated in the war by ambition, insatiable covetousness, and unprincipled rivalry; but he declares that a war which was carried on in a manner under God's auspices, should be crowned with success. As God had determined to punish Babylon, he pronounced a blessing upon Cyrus and Darius, while on the other hand Jeremiah (ch. xlviii. 10) declares those cursed who should do the work of the Lord negligently, that is, fail in strenuously carrying out the work of desolation and destruction to which God had called them as his hired executioners. It may seem to savour of cruelty, that he should wish the tender and innocent infants to be dashed and mangled upon the stones, but he does not speak under the impulse of personal feeling, and only employs words which God had himself authorized, so that this is but the declaration of a just judgment, as when our Lord says, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Mat. vii. 2). Isaiah (ch. xiii. 16) had issued a special prediction in reference to Babylon, which the psalmist has doubtless here in his eye—'Behold God has sharpened the iron, and bent the bows; he sends forth the Medes and Persians, which shall not regard silver and gold; they shall thirst for blood only,' &c."

PSALMS CXXXVIII.-CXLV.

These eight psalms form a series of Davidic psalms; and the reason assigned by our author for their insertion so near the close of the book, and far apart from the other psalms of the same author, is as probable as any other.

The titles assign the series to David; and Hengstenberg and Alexander do not hesitate to accept them as authoritative. They suppose the Psalms to have been among the last composed by David, and to have special reference to the promise in 2 Sam. vii.

We have now in Ps. cxxxviii.-cxlv. a cycle of Davidic psalms, called forth by David's reflection upon the promise in 2 Sam. vii., and by the anxiety which filled him regarding his posterity. In them he accompanies his offspring through their future history, and presents to them the anchor of safety in the storms, which he knew from his own experience certainly awaited them. We have here a prophetic legacy of David corresponding to his last words in 2 Sam. xxiii. That these psalms close the series of Davidic psalms is certainly not accidental, but is in unison with their internal character, and the time of their composition.

In Ps. cxxxviii. David sets the promise before the eyes of his family. In Ps. cxxxix. he presents to their view, for their consolation and incitement, the all-present God. In Ps. cxl. he brings still more closely to them the circumstances of danger that lay before

them. In Ps. cxli. he strengthens them against the internal dangers with which the external necessity threatened them. In Ps. cxlii. cxliii. he shows them how they were to sustain themselves if matters came to an extremity with them. Ps. cxliv. forms the transition from the prayer-songs to the song of praise with which in Ps. cxlv. the whole is concluded. There manifestly exists a correspondence between Ps. cxxxviii., the rejoicing on account of the promise of the Lord, and Ps. cxlv., the rejoicing on account of its fulfilment; the lamentations and prayers are inclosed by praise and thanksgivings.

The appropriateness and connection of these psalms is acknowledged to some extent even by those who have deprived themselves of the vantage-ground of the superscriptions. Thus Ewald says of Ps. cxl.–cxliii.: "A series of songs so similar in matter, and so much of one stamp, that one can hardly doubt that they were the production of the same poet." Köster agrees and adds: "I take them for a supplement of the old Davidic songs. For in place of the liturgical expansive character of the preceding psalms, we are here at once brought back to the lively alternation of feelings which prevailed in Ps. iii. ss." Hitzig remarks on Ps. cxl.: "The three following psalms are of a quite similar kind, and appear to have been composed by one author much about the same time."

Seventy-two psalms of David have gone before. These eight bring up the entire number to eighty. We may perhaps regard Ps. cxxxviii. as the governing castle, and the remaining heptad as divided into three and four. The section would then be denoted by the extended superscription of Ps. cxlii.—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM CXXXVIII.

This psalm belongs to that chain of Davidic psalms which were called forth by the promise in 2 Sam. vii., and which rest upon it, Ps. xviii. xxi. lxi. ci.–ciii. cx., comp. Ps. lxxii. lxxxix. cxxxii. That the promise here celebrated is no other than that is clear as day. Here, as well as there, the subject handled has respect to a promise of blessing of surpassing greatness,—the idols, which could exhibit nothing similar, must retreat before it ashamed, ver. 1; the Lord has glorified himself more by it than by all his earlier wonders, ver. 2; all kings of the earth will one day praise the Lord on account of it. Farther, here, as well as there, we have to do, not with a particular blessing, but with a chain of blessings, which reaches even into eternity, ver. 8. Finally, the promise has here the same subject as there. This is described more pointedly here in ver. 6 and 7: God elevates the oppressed David above all height, revives him in the midst of trouble, brings down all his enemies.

If the psalm refers to the promise in 2 Sam. vii., there can be no doubt of the correctness of the superscription which ascribes it to David. For he, on whom the promise has been conferred, himself stands forth as the speaker. It is a proof also of David's authorship, the union, so characteristic of him, of bold courage (see especially ver. 3) and deep humility (ver. 6). And in proof of the same comes, finally, the near relationship in which it stands with the other psalms of David, especially those which likewise refer to the promise of the everlasting kingdom, and with David's thanksgiving in 2 Sam. vii., the conclusion of which, "And now, Lord God, the word which thou hast spoken upon thy servant and upon his house, that fulfil even to eternity, and do as thou hast spoken," remarkably agrees with the conclusion of our psalm.—*Hengstenberg.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

This psalm has often been admired for the grandeur of its sentiments, the elevation of its style, as well as the variety and beauty of its imagery. *Bishop Lowth*, in his 29th Prelection, classes it amongst the Hebrew idyls, as next to Ps. civ. in respect both to the conduct of the poem and the beauty of the style. "If it be excelled," says he, "(as perhaps it is) by the former in the plan, disposition, and arrangement of the matter, it is not in the least inferior in the dignity and elegance of its sentiments, images, and figures." "Amongst its other excellencies," says *Bishop Mant*, "it is for nothing more admirable than for the exquisite skill with which it descants on the perfections of deity. The psalmist's faith in the omnipresence and omniscience of Jehovah is in the commencement depicted with a singular and beautiful variety of the most lively expressions; nor can anything be more sublime than that accumulation of the noblest and loftiest images, in the

seventh and following verses, commensurate with the limits of created nature, whereby the psalmist labours to impress upon the mind some notion of the infinity of God." If we compare this sacred poem with any hymn of classical antiquity in honour of the heathen deities, the immense superiority of the sentiments it contains must convince any reasonable person that David and the Israelites, though inferior in other respects to some other nations, surpassed them in religious knowledge. No philosopher of ancient times ever attained to such sublime views of the perfections and moral government of God as the Hebrew prophets. How are we to account for this difference but on the supposition of the divine origin of the religion of the Hebrews? On any other supposition these psalms are a greater miracle than any of those recorded by Moses.

Bishop Horsley refers the composition of this psalm to a later age than that of David. "The frequent Chaldaisms," says he, "of the diction, argue no very high antiquity." *Dr. Adam Clarke*, on the same ground, argues that it was not written by the sweet singer of Israel, but during or after the time of the captivity. Other critics, however, maintain that the several Chaldaisms to be found in it afford no foundation for such an opinion. "How any critic," says *Jebb*, "can assign this psalm to other than David I cannot understand. Every line, every thought, every turn of expression and transition is his and his only. As for the arguments drawn from the two Chaldaisms which occur (רבצי for רבעי, and צרך for עזך), this is really nugatory. These Chaldaisms consist merely in the substitution of one letter for another very like it in shape, and easily to be mistaken by a transcriber, particularly by one who had been used to the Chaldee idiom: but the moral arguments for David's authorship are so strong as to overwhelm any such verbal or rather *literal* criticism, were even the objections more formidable than they actually are."—*Translator's Note* in Calvin Translation Society's Edition.

As a proper pendant to Ps. viii., we name next Ps. cxxxix. Here the poet inverts his gaze from the blaze of suns to the strange atoms composing his own frame. He stands shuddering over the precipice of himself. Above is the All-encompassing Spirit, from whom the morning wings cannot save; and below, at a deep distance, appears amid the branching forest of his animal frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, the abyss of his spiritual existence, lying like a dark lake in the midst. How between mystery and mystery his mind, his wonder, his very reason, seem to rock like a little boat between the sea and the sky. But speedily does he regain his serenity, when he throws himself, with childlike haste and confidence, into the arms of that Fatherly Spirit, and murmurs in his bosom, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto *me*, O God; how great is the sum of them;" and looking up at last in his face, cries—"Search me, O Lord. I cannot search thee; I cannot search myself; I am overwhelmed by those dreadful depths; but search me as thou only canst; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." —Gilfillan: *Bards of the Bible.*

7. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit.* There are in Amos certain brief and bold sublimities which class his genius with that of the best of the lesser prophets. Such, in ch. ix., is the vision of the Lord standing upon the altar, and proclaiming the inextricable dilemmas into which Israel's crimes had led them. In all Scripture occur no more powerful antitheses than the following:—"He that fleeth of them shall not flee away; and he that escapeth of them shall not escape (into safety). If they dig down into Sheol, thence shall mine hand take them. If they climb up into heaven, thence shall I bring them down. If they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search for, and thence will I take them out. And if they hide themselves from mine eyes, in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. If they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall slay them, and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." How the divine omnipresence here rolls itself around the victims of the divine anger! In Ps. cxxxix. the poet wishes to escape from the Spirit of God as from a *thought* too strange and overwhelming for him; but here Israel would seek escape from him as he might from the centre of a forest of fire, but is doomed for ever to seek it in vain. An historian has given an animated description of the impossibility of escape which beset the steps of the fugitive from the power of the

Roman emperor. If he crossed the Alps, that power was before him; if he crossed the ocean, it was waiting for him on the shore; and the tropic or the frigid zone was equally unable to hide him from its Briarian grasp. Still, there remained for him an avenue of deliverance. He might plunge into the sea, or turn his sword against his own bowels, or pledge his oppressor in poison. But for the object of the just vengeance of Jehovah there lay no such way of escape; he could not thus set his foe at defiance. The sea would say, "It is not in me;" Sheol (or Hades) would re-echo the cry; if he dropped into the arms of death, they would but hand him into those of the king of terrors; and if he sought to mount to heaven, this were to flee into the metropolis of his foe. Other worlds were barred against him; or even were their barriers broken, this were only to take down the palisades which blocked the way of his perdition. The universe was transfigured into a menacing shape, fronting the criminal with a face of fire, and stretching out on all sides its myriad starry hands to arrest his retreat, or to shed down dismay upon his guilty soul. —Gilfillan: *Bards of the Bible.*

9. *If I take the wings of the morning,* &c. Light has been proved by many experiments to travel at the astonishing rate of 194,188 miles in one second of time! and comes from the sun to the earth, a distance of 93,513,794 miles, in 8 minutes and nearly 12 seconds! But, could I even fly upon the wings or rays of the morning light, which diffuses itself with such velocity over the globe from east to west, instead of being beyond thy reach, or by this sudden transition be able to escape thy notice, thy arm could still at pleasure prevent or arrest my progress, and I should still be encircled with the immensity of thy essence. The sentiment in this noble passage is remarkably striking, and the description truly sublime. —*Bagsters' Bible.*

14. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* The human frame is so admirably constructed, so delicately combined, and so much in danger of being dissolved by innumerable causes, that the more we think of it the more we tremble, and wonder at our own continued existence.

"How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!
How passing wonder He who made him such,
Who mingled in our make such strange extremes
Of different natures marvellously mixed!
Helpless immortal, insect infinite,
A worm, a god—I tremble at myself!"

To do justice to the subject it would be necessary to be well acquainted with anatomy. I have no doubt that a thorough examination of that "substance which God hath curiously wrought" would furnish abundant evidence of the justness of the psalmist's words; and even those things which are manifest to common observation may be sufficient for this purpose. In general, it is observable that the human frame abounds with avenues at which enter everything conducive to preservation and comfort, and everything that can excite alarm. Perhaps there is not one of these avenues but what may become an inlet to death, nor one of the blessings of life but what may be the means of accomplishing it. We live by inhalation, but we also die by it. Diseases and death, in innumerable forms, are conveyed by the very air we breathe. God hath given us a relish for divers aliments, and rendered them necessary to our subsistence; yet, from the abuse of them, what a train of disorders and premature deaths are found amongst men! And where there is no abuse, a single delicious morsel may, by the evil design of another, or even by mere accident, convey poison through all our veins, and in one hour reduce the most athletic frame to a corpse.

The elements of fire and water, without which we could not subsist, contain properties which in a few moments would be able to destroy us; nor can the utmost circumspection at all times preserve us from their destructive power. A single stroke on the head may divest us of reason or of life. A wound or a bruise of the spine may instantly deprive the lower extremities of all sensation. If the vital parts be injured so as to suspend the performance of their mysterious functions, how soon is the constitution broken up! By means of the circulation of the blood how easily and suddenly are deadly substances diffused throughout the frame! Through this fearful medium not only the taint of vice rankles in the veins of the debauchee, but virtue itself may destroy us. The putridity of a morbid subject has been imparted to the very hand stretched out to save it. The poisoned arrow, the envenomed dart, the hydrophobic saliva,

derive from hence their fearful efficacy. Even the pores of the skin, necessary as they are to life, may be the means of death. Not only are poisonous substances hereby admitted, but, when obstructed by surrounding damps, the noxious humours of the body, instead of being emitted, are retained in the system, and become productive of numerous diseases, always afflictive, and often fatal to life.

From these few instances we may learn our absolute dependence upon divine preservation. So numerous are the avenues at which death may enter, that no human foresight can possibly render us secure for a single moment: and even those dangers which may in a measure be avoided require for this purpose the regular exercise of reason; but reason itself depends upon a variety of minute causes over which we have no control. Instead of wondering at the number of premature deaths that are constantly witnessed, there is far greater reason to wonder that there are no more, and that any of us survive to seventy or eighty years of age.

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long"

Assuredly it can be ascribed to nothing short of the mighty power and all-pervading providence of God. A proper sense of this truth, while it would prevent us from presumptuously exposing ourselves to unnecessary injury, would induce us to commit ourselves to the divine protection in every danger which duty calls us to encounter.—*Fuller.*

16. *Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them.* This is one of the most obscure and doubtful verses in the book of Psalms. Its difficulty to our own translators may be gathered from the fact, that *substance being yet imperfect* answers to a single Hebrew word, and that *my members* is a gratuitous addition to the text. The first word in Hebrew occurs only here, but is clearly derived from a verb which means to *roll* or *roll up* (2 Ki. ii. 8), and may therefore be supposed itself to signify something rolled up or rolled together, and from this may be deduced the sense of something shapeless or unformed, or more specifically that of an embryo or fetus. The next difficulty lies in the expression *all of them*, evaded in the English Bible by changing it to *all my members*, and then making this the subject of the plurals following. The best interpreters are now disposed to construe *all of them* with *days* by a grammatical prolepsis. In thy book all of them are written—namely, all my days, as they were planned, projected, or decreed, before as yet one of them had really existed. *Written* and *formed* are then parallel expressions. *All of them are written*, days are delineated or depicted. By *days* (translated in our Bible *in continuance*) we are then to understand not merely the length but the events and vicissitudes of life. See Job xiv. 5; Ps. lvi. 8. This is one of those cases in which the difficulty lies in the particular expressions, while the general import of the passage is clearly determined by the context. Instead of (לא) *not*, the *keri* or marginal reading in the Hebrew Bible has (לו) *to him*, a variation to which no one has succeeded in attaching a coherent sense. Precisely the same difference of text exists in Ps. c. 3.—*Alexander.*

23, 24. *Search me, O God,* &c. The truly religious man is anxious to know the real state of his heart. This anxiety is very visible in the prayer before us. David had evidently been searching and trying his own heart, and it was his desire to be thoroughly acquainted with it, which led him so earnestly to beseech God to search and try it also. But the heart is a book which few of us like to study. It is one which requires close and serious thought, and thought is one of those things which our careless minds most hate. Besides, it is a book which teaches many humbling and mortifying lessons, and we do not wish to be mortified and humbled. We love the falsehood which exalts, better than we love the truth which abases us. True religion, however, begins with thoughtfulness. It turns the eyes of a man inward upon himself. It causes him to commune with his own heart, and to make "diligent search" into his own spirit. True, he may find this self-examination painful and humiliating, but this makes no matter to him. He feels that he has the salvation of an immortal soul at stake, and he is not to lose that soul for the sake of being kept easy in his follies, and proud in his sins. . . .

The sincere Christian is not conscious of having within his heart one cherished

sin. This is strongly intimated in the psalmist's prayer. His words imply that if there were any wicked way in him, any evil disposition habitually indulged, he could not be walking in the way everlasting. Not that he meant to speak of himself or of any other man as wholly free from sinful thoughts and desires, for on other occasions we hear him confessing that there was much sin within him, and bitterly lamenting it. But it is one thing to have iniquity entering the breast, and another thing to harbour it and have it reigning there. St. Paul felt a sinful "law in his members," but he felt it as a "warring against the law of his mind," as opposed to the habitual frame of his soul, to that holy and heavenly principle which made him "delight in the law of God after the inward man," and enabled him to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Every Christian also feels the same warfare within. Sin tempts and harasses him, and sometimes brings him into captivity, but it cannot hold him in bondage; it cannot make him quietly submit to its hated laws. It overcomes and degrades him for an hour, but we soon see the prisoner struggling with his vile oppressor, and bursting the bonds. Trampling his lusts underneath his feet, we hear him exclaim, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord."—*Bradley's Sermons.*

PSALM CXL.

To the chief musician. A psalm. By David. We find ourselves in this psalm carried back not only to the times of David but to those of the Sauline persecution, from which the images are evidently borrowed. Besides the warlike tone, the vigorous conciseness, the verbal agreements with Davidic psalms, combined with eminent originality, the very structure is Davidic, and exhibits the familiar sequence of complaint (ver. 1–5), prayer (ver. 6–8), and confident anticipation (ver. 9–13). So clearly do these features of the composition mark its origin, even independently of the inscription, that nothing can account for its position here but the hypothesis already stated, that these ancient psalms were incorporated into a series of later date and placed in the collection, not according to their individual antiquity, but according to the date of the whole set or system into which they had been made to enter. Like the psalms immediately preceding, this was probably composed by David after the reception of the great Messianic promise, and with immediate reference to it.—*Alexander.*

The old opinion, that the psalm refers to the relation between David and Saul, has a certain measure of truth for its foundation. David has here, as also in Ps. cix., borrowed the colours from this relation: in Saul, the most powerful and malignant enemy of the past, he beholds the type of the future enemies of his seed. We find, in particular, also here a strong emphasis upon calumny and false accusations, which is characteristic of the Sauline psalms. Besides, it is precisely from these psalms that this psalm more especially borrows. —*Hengstenberg.*

10. *Let burning coals fall upon them,* &c. The expressions of wrath and imprecation against the enemies of God and of his people which occur in some of the psalms . . . seem to exhibit a vindictiveness which is apt to distress the feelings of many Christian readers. In order to obviate this offence, many of our pious commentators assure us that these expressions are not maledictions or imprecations, but simply declarations of what will or may take place. But this is utterly inadmissible, for in many of the most startling passages the language of the original is plainly imperative and not indicative (see Ps. lix. 14; lxix. 25, 28; lxxix. 6). "The truth is," says the writer of an able article on the subject in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1844, "that only a morbid benevolence, a mistaken philanthropy, takes offence at these psalms, for in reality they are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which Christ enjoined. Resentment against evil-doers is so far from being sinful, that we find it exemplified in the meek and spotless Redeemer himself (see Mark iii. 5). If the emotion and its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 22) wish the enemy of Christ to be accursed (ἀνάθεμα), or say of his own enemy, Alexander the coppersmith, 'The Lord reward him according to his works' (2 Tim. iv. 14); and, especially, how could the spirits of the just in heaven call on God for vengeance?" Rev. vi. 10.—*Pictorial Bible.*

PSALM CXLI.

The superscription which ascribes the psalm to David is confirmed by the close

affinity it bears to the psalms of David in connection with undoubted originality. The pregnant brevity of the language extorts, even from De Wette, the confession: "I consider it, with Ps. x., to be one of the oldest." That the psalm, like the whole cycle to which it belongs, refers to greater relations than those of a private individual, is evident from the expressions, "their judges," and "our bones," in ver. 6 and 7. It is also fitly assigned to this cycle on the ground, that ver. 9 and 10 connect themselves with the preceding psalm, while ver. 6 refers to Ps. cxxxviii. 4; and lastly, on account of the predilection peculiar to this cycle for rare words and unusual forms.—*Hengstenberg.*

5. *Let the righteous smite me*, &c. *Perowne* renders—"Let a righteous man smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be as oil upon my head: let not my head refuse it;" and adds, "According to the rendering I have preferred of this verse, the sense will be, "I will gladly welcome even the reproofs of the good (comp. Prov. xxvii. 6; Eccl. vii. 5), and I will avail myself of prayer as the best defence against the wickedness of my persecutors." It is possible, however, that the last clause may refer not to his enemies but to the righteous, in which case it must be rendered, "For still my prayer shall be offered in their misfortunes" (so Ewald).

Again, the first two clauses have been rendered, "Let a righteous man smite me in love (accus.) and reprove me. Such oil upon the head let not my head refuse" (Delitzsch). But nothing is gained by this, and the balance of the members is not so well preserved. Others again (as Maur., Hengst.) understand by the "righteous," God, appealing to Is. xxiv. 16—where, however, the "righteous" means not God, but "the righteous nation."

In ver. 4 he had prayed that he might not be led astray by the evil he saw around him, nor allured by the blandishments and luxurious prosperity of the wicked. Now he says, on the contrary, "Let me ever be ready to welcome even reproof from the righteous," which, however harsh, is salutary. The wounds of a friend are faithful, and better than the kisses of an enemy."

7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth*, &c. These words present a strong contrast between David's treatment of his enemies and that which they adopted towards him and those who were associated with him. We are not sufficiently informed respecting the cruelties which were perpetrated against David and those who adhered to him, to enable us to point out the instances to which he here alludes; but the murder of Abimelech and of the priests who were with him furnishes a pregnant proof of the atrocities which Saul and his agents were capable of perpetrating. See 1 Sam. xxii. It appears from the language of this verse that such enormities were not confined to a few cases, but must have been numerous, to give occasion to the image which is employed to describe them. As a man who ploughs or digs the earth, scatters it in abundance and without remorse, so were the bones scattered of those who dared to show any sympathy for the sufferings of this proscribed and devoted man.—*Walford.*

PSALM CXLII.

1, 2. *I cried unto the Lord*, &c. It showed singular presence of mind in David that he was not paralyzed with fear, or that he did not in a paroxysm of fury take vengeance upon his enemy, as he easily might have done; and that he was not actuated by despair to take away his life, but composedly addressed himself to the exercise of prayer. There was good reason why the title should have been affixed to the psalm to note this circumstance, and David had good grounds for mentioning how he commended himself to God. Surrounded by the army of Saul, and hemmed in by destruction on every side, how was it possible for him to have spared so implacable an enemy, had he not been fortified against the strongest temptations by prayer? The repetition he makes use of indicates his having prayed with earnestness, so as to be impervious to every assault of temptation.

He tells us still more clearly in the next verse that he disburdened his cares unto God. To pour out one's thoughts and tell over his afflictions implies the reverse of those perplexing anxieties which men brood over inwardly to their own distress, and by which they torture themselves, and are chafed by their afflictions rather than led to God; or it implies the reverse of those frantic exclamations to which others give utterance who find no comfort in the superintending providence and care of God. In short, we are left to infer that while

he did not give way before men to loud and senseless lamentations, neither did he suffer himself to be tormented with inward and suppressed cares, but made known his griefs with unsuspecting confidence to the Lord.—*Calvin.*

PSALM CXLIII.

In unison with the superscription, the psalm bears evidence throughout of David's spirit and David's mode of expression. It is almost wholly composed of the sounds of complaint, supplication, and hope, which had already been uttered in the earlier Davidic Psalms (only in such), and had sunk deep into the heart. These clear brooks were drawn from all sides into the channel of this smooth-flowing psalm, which was designed to provide quickening for the fainting souls of David's race during future times of oppression. With so much of dependence the psalm still bears throughout the character of originality, not merely where the dependence ceases, as in ver. 2, which has become of such importance for the church, and to which the psalm owes its place among those of the penitential class, though, from its predominant tendency, it does not belong to that class, but also in the dependent passages themselves, in the thoughtful and artificial manner of their collection, which could only have proceeded from the person out of whose breast the utterances originally welled forth. There is nowhere any trace of "a flat compilation;" all is feeling and life. Along with this there is the repose and self-possession of one who does not find himself immediately involved in the distress, but looks down upon it as from a high tower, and prays and intercedes for the afflicted of his seed, as Moses of old did upon the Mount.

That the psalm must not be viewed apart from those that surround it, is clear already from the connection with Ps. cxlii., comp. ver. 4 here with ver. 3 there, ver. 8 with ver. 3, and ver. 11 with ver. 7. That David calls himself so expressly at the beginning and the end the servant of God, establishes a connection with 2 Sam. vii., where, in David's thanksgiving, this appellation occurs almost in every verse.—*Hengstenberg.*

The Septuagint ascribes this psalm to the period when David was in great distress, arising from Absalom's misconduct; which is as likely an opinion as any we can form. There is probably, in ver. 2, a tacit reference to the great transgression, the consequences of which followed David all his days. As he would not fail to be reminded of it by the sorrows which had now come upon him, and as his purpose was, notwithstanding, to implore divine support and deliverance, he deprecates God's righteous judgment, since if no man could be just with God, certainly he, who had so greatly transgressed, could have no claim to such a state. The consciousness of his guilt, though he had reason to believe it was forgiven, induced him thus to abase himself before God, when he was about to offer earnest entreaties for deliverance from dangers which threatened his dignity and life; while he still maintained his hope that God looked upon him as his servant, whom he had pledged himself to protect.—*Walford.*

This is the last of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called. In the Hebrew it is styled a Psalm of David; in some copies of the LXX. it is further said to have been written when he had to flee from his son Absalom. It is probable that the deep tone of sorrow and anguish which pervades the psalm, and the deep sense of sin, led to the belief that it must be referred to that occasion. The spirit and the language, it is true, are not unworthy of David; yet the many passages borrowed from earlier psalms make it more probable that this psalm is the work of some later poet. Delitzsch says very truly, that if David himself did not write it—and he admits that the many expressions derived from other sources are against such a supposition—still the psalm is "an extract of the most precious balsam from the old Davidic songs."—*Perowne.*

10. *Teach me to do thy will.* He now rises to something higher, praying not merely for deliverance from outward troubles, but, what is of still greater importance, for the guidance of God's Spirit, that he might not decline to the right hand or to the left, but be kept in the path of rectitude. This is a request which should never be forgotten when temptations assail us with great severity, as it is peculiarly difficult to submit to God without resorting to unwarrantable methods of relief. As anxiety, fear, disease, languor, or pain, often tempt persons to particular steps, David's example should lead us to pray

for divine restraint, and that we may not be hurried, through impulses of feeling, into unjustifiable courses. We are to mark carefully his way of expressing himself, for what he asks is not simply to be taught what the will of God is, but to be taught and brought to the observance and doing of it. The former kind of teaching is of less avail, as upon God's showing us our duty we by no means necessarily follow it, and it is necessary that he should draw out our affections to himself. God therefore must be master and teacher to us not only in the dead letter, but by the inward motions of his Spirit; indeed there are three ways in which he acts the part of our teacher, instructing us by his Word, enlightening our minds by the Spirit, and engraving instruction upon our hearts so as to bring us to observe it with a true and cordial consent. The mere hearing of the Word would serve no purpose, nor is it enough that we understand it; there must be besides the willing obedience of the heart. Nor does he merely say, *Teach me that I may be capable of doing*, as the deluded Papists imagine that the grace of God does no more than make us flexible to what is good, but he seeks something to be actually and presently done.

He insists upon the same thing in the next clause, when he says, *Let thy good Spirit lead me*, &c., for he desires the guidance of the Spirit not merely as he enlightens our minds, but as he effectually influences the consent of our hearts, and, as it were, leads us by the hand. The passage in its connection warns us of the necessity of being sedulously on our guard against yielding to inordinate passions in any contests we may have with wicked persons, and as we have no sufficient wisdom or power of our own by which to check and restrain these passions, that we should always seek the guidance of God's Spirit, to keep them in moderation.—*Calvin.*

12. *And of thy mercy cut off*, &c. In this verse he repeats for the fifth or sixth time that he looked for life only of God's free mercy. Whatever severity may appear on the part of God when he destroys the wicked, David affirms that the vengeance taken upon them would be a proof of fatherly mercy to him. Indeed these two things often meet together—the severity and the goodness of God; for in stretching out his hand to deliver his own people, he directs the thunder of his indignation against their enemies. In short, he comes forth armed for the deliverance of his people, as he says in Isaiah, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and this is the year of my redemption" (Is. lxiii. 4). In calling himself *the servant of God*, he by no means boasts of his services, but rather commends the grace of God, to whom he owed this privilege. This is not an honour to be got by our own struggles or exertions—to be reckoned among God's servants; it depends upon his free choice, by which he condescends before we are born to take us into the number and rank of his followers, as David elsewhere declares still more explicitly—"I am thy servant, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid" (Ps. cxvi. 16). This is equivalent to making himself God's client, and committing his life to his protection.—*Calvin.*

PSALM CXLIV.

In unison with the superscription, David comes forth speaking, comp. especially ver. 2, which alone suffices to dispose of the supposition, that Israel is the speaker here; and the declaration: who constrains my people under me, cannot, without great violence, be brought into accordance with that supposition. David, as the author, appropriates also from Ps. xviii. It is an arbitrary supposition, that here a transference is made to Israel of what was then said originally of David. The confirmation which the superscription here derives from the contents comes also in support of the whole cycle to which the psalm belongs. An objection has been brought against the Davidic authorship from the "traces of reading" it contains. But one would require to consider more exactly what sort of reading is here to be thought of. It is only the psalms of David which form the groundwork of this. But that it is one of David's peculiarities to derive from his earlier productions a foundation for new ones, is evident from a variety of facts (comp. Introd. to Ps. cviii.), which, if any doubt might still be entertained on the subject, would obtain a firm ground to stand upon in this psalm, which *can* only have been composed by David. Then the way and manner of the use made of such materials is to be kept in view. This is always of a spirited and feeling nature, and no trace anywhere exists of a lifeless bor-

rowing. That we cannot think here of such a borrowing, that the appropriation of the earlier did not proceed from spiritual impotence, but rests upon deeper grounds, is manifest from the consideration of the second part, where the dependence entirely ceases, and where even the opponents of the Davidic authorship have not been able to overlook the strong poetical spirit of the time of David. They betake to the miserable shift of affirming, that the psalmist had borrowed this part from a much older poem now lost.

The situation is that of an oppression through mighty external enemies. As this psalm rests upon Ps. xviii., which was composed by David toward the end of his life, after he had obtained deliverance from all the perils of war, it cannot be referred to the personal relations of David; David rather transports himself here, as in the whole of the cycle, into the future of his race.

This psalm forms the transition from the two prayer-psalms, cxlii. cxliii., to the song of praise, cxlv. The cloud of adversity begins already to disperse, and the sun of salvation is on the eve of breaking forth. Ver. 9 and 10 show that the psalmist already stands on the threshold of praise and thanksgiving. The cry from the deep has ceased; at the very commencement, the exclamation, "Let the Lord be praised," &c., breathes the spirit of victory, and leads on to the: "I will praise thy name," in Ps. cxlv.—*Hengstenberg.*

This is a kind of supplement or counterpart to Ps. xviii., in which the view there taken of David's personal experience is applied to the anticipated case of his successors. The design thus assumed accounts for the position of the psalm in the collection. That its being placed precisely here is not fortuitous, may be inferred from its furnishing a kind of link between the urgent entreaties of the preceding psalms, and the triumphant praise of those which follow. The Davidic origin of this psalm is as marked as that of any in the Psalter. The accumulation of Davidic phrases is confined to the first part, while the last is independent and original, a fact entirely inconsistent with the supposition of a later compilation. The psalmist thanks God for his protection of himself, and of mankind in general, ver. 1-4; prays for deliverance from present dangers, ver. 5-8; expresses his confident anticipation of a favourable answer, ver. 9, 10; renews his prayer, not only for himself but for the chosen people, ver. 11-14; and felicitates them that they are such, ver. 15.—*Alexander.*

The Spirit of the Lord spake by David the words of this song when the king felt his need of the King of kings to subdue the turbulent and proud spirits who were ambitious of distinction (ver. 2), as well as to conquer the nations of idolaters who hated God's anointed (ver. 7-11). The Spirit leads him back to the day when he sang Ps. xviii. (see ver. 1, 2), the day when he was delivered from Saul and other foes; and still further back to the quiet night when the strains of Ps. viii. ascended to the ear of Jehovah (see ver. 3); but he does not fail also to lead him forward to a future day, when earth shall witness its millennial scenes, among which, not the least wonderful and refreshing shall be Israel in all the restored plenty of his last times, with the favour of Jehovah over all. In all this, David was the type of Christ.—*A. A. Bonar.*

1, 2. *Blessed be the Lord my strength which teacheth my hands to war*, &c. Let poor and humble youths to whom the future seems dark, and who yet have noble aspirations to serve God and their generation, not be cast down, but hope in the Lord. He who took David from the crook and taught him the use of the sword and the sling, and lifted up his head above all his enemies round about, is still the patron of poor and pious boys and girls, who make him their refuge and their all. It matters not how unskilful one may now be, and how wholly unprepared for a given work, if God will but take him in hand. Even parents and instructors may sometimes bring great discouragements on their most promising children and pupils. More than one of Walter Scott's teachers complained of the thickness of his skull; a number of his teachers pronounced Barrow a blockhead; while Isaac Newton was declared to be fit for nothing but to drive the team. Jesse so slighted David, as not even to call him to the sacrifice, and his brothers declared that they knew the pride and naughtiness of his heart. But God raised him above all these obstacles and oppositions. Set your hope in God, struggling youth. Never cease prayer and effort.—*Plumer.*

3. *Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him!* He amplifies the goodness shown by God by instituting

a comparison. Having declared how singularly he had been dealt with, he turns his eye inward, and asks, "Who am I, that God should show me such condescension?" He speaks of man in general, only the circumstance is noticeable, that he commends the mercy of God, by considering his lowly and abject condition. In other places he mentions grounds of humiliation of a more personal or private nature,—here he confines himself to what has reference to our common nature; and though even in discussing the nature of man, there are other reasons he might have specified why he is unworthy of the regard and love of God, he briefly adverts to his being like the smoke and as a *shadow*. We are left to infer that the riches of the divine goodness are extended to objects altogether unworthy in themselves. We are warned, when apt at any time to forget ourselves, and think we are something, when we are nothing, that the simple fact of the shortness of our life should put down all arrogance and pride. The Scriptures, in speaking of the frailty of man, comprehend whatever is necessarily connected with it. And, indeed, if our life vanish in a moment, what is there stable about us? We are taught this truth also—that we cannot properly estimate the divine goodness, unless we take into consideration what we are as to our condition, as we can only ascribe to God what is due unto him, by acknowledging that his goodness is bestowed upon undeserving creatures. The reader may seek for further information upon this point in Ps. viii., where nearly the same truth is insisted upon.—*Calvin.*

7. *Send thine hand from above, rid me from the hand of strange children.* David having celebrated his victories over some of his enemies, and extolled the mercy and goodness of God, to whom he ascribeth the achievement of them, now proceedeth to request a further manifestation of the omnipotent arm in his favour against other hostile forces, which still threatened his country upon his accession to the throne; such as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, &c., see 2 Sam. v. and viii. These are called, metaphorically, "great waters," threatening to overwhelm and destroy everything; and, in plainer terms, "strange children," or aliens from the covenant of Jehovah, and the commonwealth of Israel; children who "speak lies, and work wickedness," or, as Dr. Hammond interpreteth ver. 8, "Whose mouth speaketh or maketh profession of vanity," שָׁוְא, that is, idolatry; "and their right hand," that on which they depend for support, the object of their confidence, "is a right hand of falsehood," שֶׁקֶר, and one that will fail all who rely upon it for help. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is therefore entreated once more to appear in the cause of his anointed; to go forth, as of old, to the battle against the enemies of his people, with all the tokens of his displeasure and vengeance, dismaying and putting to flight these "armies of aliens." In like manner, the church, or mystical body of Christ, is instant in prayer for the final completion of her hope. She wisheth for the glorious day when her God and Saviour shall bow the heavens and come down to judgment, causing the mountains to smoke, and flame, and dissolve, and flow down before him; when his lightnings, those arrows of his indignation, and ministers of his vengeance, shall scatter the hosts of darkness, and destroy the anti-Christian power; when we shall be delivered from every enemy, and from all that hate us, and David our king.—*Horne.*

15. *Happy is that people*, &c. He thus concludes that the divine favour had been sufficiently shown and manifested to his people. Should any object that it breathed altogether a gross and worldly spirit to estimate man's happiness by benefits of a transitory description, I would say in reply that we must read the two things in connection, that those are happy who recognize the favour of God in the abundance they enjoy, and have such a sense of it from these transitory blessings as leads them through a persuasion of his fatherly love to aspire after the true inheritance. There is no impropriety in calling those happy whom God blesses in this world, provided they do not show themselves blinded in the improvement and use which they make of their mercies, or foolishly and supinely overlook the author of them. The kind providence of God in not suffering us to want any of the means of life is surely a striking illustration of his wonderful love. What more desirable than to be the objects of God's care, especially if we have sufficient understanding to conclude from the liberality with which he supports us that he is our Father? For every-

thing is to be viewed with a reference to this point. Better it were at once to perish for want than have a mere brute satisfaction, and forget the main thing of all, that they and they only are happy whom God has chosen for his people. We are to observe this, that while God in giving us meat and drink admits us to the enjoyment of a certain measure of happiness, it does not follow that those believers are miserable who struggle through life in want and poverty, for this want, whatever it be, God can counterbalance by better consolations.—*Calvin.*

PSALM CXLV.

The well-known 45th Psalm sang of the King in his beauty; this is a hymn of praise concerning the reign of Jehovah and his kingdom. It is a Davidic and an alphabetic psalm. In regard to its alphabetic structure, it has one peculiarity, viz. the "*nun*" is omitted; the reason of which may be, that (as we have seen in some other psalms of this structure) by means of that, or some other such omission, we might be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition.

It is peculiar, also, in its title; indeed, quite unique—"Of David: praise." The word is תְּהִלָּה. Some render this "a hymn;" others, such as Hengstenberg, "a *praise-song*," differing in this from the תְּפִלָּה, the "*prayer-song.*" It is prayer turned into praise. Patrick remarks that the term seemed so peculiar and excellent, that it was given from this psalm to the whole book, which is entitled by the Jews the book of תְּהִלִּים. Bythner has this note on the word—"So called because it is throughout nothing but the celebration of God; so that the ancient Jews used to say, that the man was already enjoying the felicity of the age to come, who daily recited it three times with the mouth and heart." We are getting now beyond the region of former themes; all in the remaining psalms is praise, praise; and this title is an appropriate introduction to the closing group of praise-psalms. Nor is its burden less appropriate; for, being a song of the kingdom, it ushers us into the region of eternal praise.—*Bonar.*

The design of this psalm, as its contents abundantly show, is to celebrate the power, righteousness, and goodness of God. It was probably written towards the conclusion of David's reign, when the kingdom of Israel had attained its highest prosperity, and was blessed on every side with the enjoyment of perfect peace and security.

During the attention which the writer of these remarks has necessarily given to the work which is now approaching its close, he has, in several instances, felt so powerfully the excellence of these songs of Zion, as to think that that on which he had last been engaged surpassed, in interest and beauty, all that had preceded. He does not mean to pledge himself to the perfect correctness of this view; but, with regard to the psalm which is now the object of consideration, he may venture to say, that if others equal to it may be selected, none certainly can be found superior in the lucid simplicity and native grandeur of its diction, or in the affecting and engaging sentiments which it discloses. It places before us the omnipotence of the Deity, combined with such express assertions of his essential rectitude and goodness as we cannot contemplate without perceiving that, glorious as are his works, he himself is surpassing in glory and beauty; and that no object on which our thoughts can be fixed bears any comparison with him. There are, in the bosoms of all men, who are in some measure acquainted with themselves, so many memorials of weakness and of guilt that the almightiness of God, when viewed apart from the unchangeable rectitude and benignity of his character, is far more likely to produce emotions of dread and horror than any sentiments of confidence and delight. But when we behold omnipotence united with infinite love, and with wisdom and rectitude so absolutely perfect that it is the most impossible of things for him to do wrong, then, if we desire his favour and friendship to forgive and sustain us, hope extends its consoling energies to our hearts, and we learn to rejoice in knowing that He in whose hands ourselves and all creatures are and must ever be, is invested with power to effect all the purposes of his beneficent will, and to feel that we are safer in his keeping than in our own, and that though we are frail, feeble, and unworthy, he is pledged by the necessary excellence of his nature to educe good from evil, and so to direct all events, temporal and eternal, as shall demonstrate him to be the only wise and good, and to be worthy of all

glory and honour from the whole intelligent universe.—*Walford.*

PSALMS CXLVI.-CL.

These are the Hallelujah psalms, so called because they begin and end with *Hallelujah.* They form a fitting close to the book of Psalms. We subjoin the eloquent words of Mr. Gilfillan:—"Perhaps finer than all are those little bursts of irrepressible praise which we find at the close. During the course of the book you had been conducted along very diversified scenes; now beside green pastures, now through dark glens, now by still waters, now by floods, and now by dismal swamps, now through the silent wilderness, where the sun himself was sleeping on his watch-tower—in sympathy with the sterile idleness below; and now through the bustle and blood of battlefields, where the elements seemed to become parties in the all-absorbing fury of the fray; but, at last, you stand beside the psalmists, upon a clear, commanding eminence, whence, looking back on the way they had been led, forward to the future, and up to their God, now no longer hiding himself from his anointed ones, they break into pæans of praise; and, not satisfied with their own orisons, call on all objects, above, around, and below, to join the hymn, become, and are worthy of becoming, the organs of a universal devotion. The last six or seven psalms are the Beulah of the book; there the sun shineth night and day, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. From a reflection of their fire have sprung the hymn which Milton ascribes to our first parents, the hymn which closes the 'Seasons,' and the great psalm which swelled from the harp of Coleridge, as he struck it to the music of the Arveiron, and in the light of the morning-star. And surely those bright gushes of song occurring at the close, unconsciously typify the time when man, saved from all his wanderings, strengthened by all his wrestlings, and recovered from his falls, shall, clothed in white robes, and standing in a regenerated earth, as in a temple, pour out floods of praise harmonizing with the old songs of heaven—when the nations, as with one voice, shall sing—

"Praise ye the Lord, God's praise within
His sanctuary raise;
And to him in the firmament
Of his power give ye praise.
Because of all his mighty acts,
With praise him magnify:
O praise him, as he doth excel
In glorious majesty.

"Praise him with trumpet's sound; his praise
With psaltery advance:
With timbrel, harp, string'd instruments,
And organs, in the dance.
Praise him on cymbals loud: him praise
On cymbals sounding high,
Let each thing breathing praise the Lord,
Praise to the Lord give ye."

—*Bards of the Bible.*

PSALM CXLVI.

This psalm may be divided into two equal parts, the first of which describes the happiness of those who trust in God and not in man, ver. 1-5; while the second gives the reason, drawn from the divine perfections, ver. 6-10. The psalm is distinguished from the Davidic series which precedes it (Ps. cxxxviii.-cxlv.) by its whole internal character. At the same time, its coincidences of expression with the one immediately before it, show that it was meant to be used in connection with it, and may therefore be regarded as the closing psalm of the whole series, beginning with Psalm cxxxv., and belonging to the time of Haggai and Zechariah, to which the psalm before us is expressly referred in the Septuagint version.—*Alexander.*

PSALM CXLVII.

Like the last psalm and those which follow it, this is evidently an anthem intended for the service of the second temple. It celebrates God's almighty and gracious rule over his people and over the world of nature, but mingles with this a special commemoration of his goodness in bringing back his people from their captivity and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. In the allusions to these events in ver. 2, 3, and ver. 13, 14, we shall probably be justified in seeing the occasion of the psalm. It may have been written for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, which, as we learn from Neh. xii. 27, was kept "with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps." It is indeed not improbable, as Hengstenberg suggests, that not this psalm only, but the rest of the psalms to the end of the book, are all anthems, originally composed for the same occasion. The wall had been built under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty and discourage-

ment (Neh. ii. 17; iv. 23); its completion was celebrated with no common joy and thankfulness; "for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."—*Perowne.*

The Old Testament history closes, in point of time, with the administration of Nehemiah. The great work accomplished by Nehemiah was the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem. It was by this that he was afterwards remembered: "among the elect," says the son of Sirach, "was Neemias, whose renown is great, who raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and the bars, and raised up our ruins again." That a memorial of that work would be preserved in the closing strains of the Psalter is no more than we might expect to find; and we may reasonably conclude both from their language and place that it was for the occasion of the thanksgiving procession after the completion of the walls that Ps. cxlviii.–cl. were written. It was evidently no ordinary assemblage. "At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem," we read, "they sought the Levites out of all their places to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages . . . ; for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem." The names of the priests' sons who blew the trumpets are carefully recorded, as also those of the other Levite musicians who marched "with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them;" while, lastly, a sort of epilogue at the end of the chapter in which this account is contained seems to imply that every effort was on this occasion made to re-establish the sacred musical service on the basis of the rules of the original foundation of David as nearly as the circumstances of the time would permit. And in this there was an obvious fitness. The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was looked upon as the return to the days of David, by whom that city had been first erected into the Israelitish capital. The trials and humiliations of the captivity seemed at length to have passed away. All was once more new; and the Israel of the restored Jerusalem was the type of the church triumphant of the last days, the glorious company of victorious saints, ransomed from the captivity of an imperious world, into whose lips this very psalm is virtually put, and whose praises a yet struggling Christendom anticipates, looking forward with the certainty of divine assurance to the season of the final exaltation of the meek, and of the final casting of the wicked down to the ground.

The psalm has its points of resemblance to Ps. xxxiii. civ.; but almost every verse in it is marked by the restoration-character which belongs to the whole. Jerusalem built up after her desolation, the bars of her gates made fast; the children of God that were scattered abroad gathered together in one, and the denizens of Zion filled with the richest of blessings within her; the wounded bound up, the heart-broken healed; these are all images, the relation of which to the general theme of the psalm can hardly be mistaken.—*Thrupp.*

4. *He telleth the number of the stars,* &c. The late celebrated astronomer, Dr. Herschel, has informed us that in the most crowded parts of the Milky Way, when exploring that region with his best glasses, he has had fields of view which contained no less than 588 stars, and these were continued for many minutes; so that "in one quarter of an hour's time there passed no less than 116,000 stars through the field of view of his telescope." It has been computed that nearly *one hundred millions of stars* might be perceived by the most perfect instruments, were all the regions of the sky thoroughly explored. And yet, all this vast assemblage of suns and worlds, when compared with what lies beyond the utmost boundaries of human vision, in the immeasurable spaces of creation, may be no more than as the smallest particle of vapour to the immense ocean. Immeasurable regions of space lie beyond the utmost limits of mortal view, into which even imagination itself can scarcely penetrate, and which are, doubtless, replenished with the operations of divine wisdom and omnipotence. . . .

In consequence of recent discoveries, we have now the strongest reason to believe, that all the stars in the universe are arranged into clusters, or groups, which astronomers distinguish by the name of *Nebulæ* or *Starry Systems*, each nebula consisting of many thou-

sands of stars. The nearest nebula is that whitish space or zone which is known by the name of the *Milky Way*, to which our sun is supposed to belong. It consists of many hundreds of thousands of stars. When Dr. Herschel examined this region with his powerful telescopes, he found a portion of it, only fifteen degrees long and two broad, which contained 50,000 stars, large enough to be distinctly counted: and he suspected twice as many more which, for want of sufficient light in his telescope, he saw only now and then. More than 2500 nebulæ have already been observed; and if each of them contain as many stars as the Milky Way, several hundreds of millions of stars must exist, even within that portion of the heavens which lies open to our observation.—*Dick.*

17. *Who can stand before his cold?* &c. At particular times the cold in the *East* is so very intense as to kill man and beast. *Jacobus de Vitriaco*, one of the writers in the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, says, that in an expedition in which he was engaged against Mount Tabor, on the 24th of December, the cold was so intense that many of the poor people, and the beasts of burden, died by it. And *Albertus Aquensis*, another of these writers, speaking of the cold in Judea, says, that thirty of the people who attended Baldwin I. in the mountainous districts near the Dead Sea, were killed by it; and that in that expedition they had to contend with horrible hail and ice, with unheard of *snow and rain.* From this we find that the winters are often very severe in Judea; and in such cases as the above, we may well call out, "Who can stand against his cold?" —*Adam Clarke.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

It is not unlikely that this hymn of praise was composed for the great solemnity of the dedication of the second temple. It consists altogether of praise, calling upon all nature, heavenly and earthly, rational and irrational, to concur in praising him whose power, wisdom, and providence are displayed in all his works. The exhortation which is addressed to inanimate and irrational beings is the language of poetry, which indulges and delights itself in attributing to every part of nature the sentiments, emotions, and feelings by which it is itself actuated; and in the lively expression of such sentiments we behold the fervent piety of the writer, which, yielding itself up to the delightful musings of impassioned imagination, peoples the universe with intelligent natures only, on which it calls to engage with itself in celebrating the matchless excellence of the Father of all, and in whom all "live, move, and have their being."—*Walford.*

Milton's imitation of this magnificent ode in the morning hymn of Adam in *Paradise Lost* is well known (v. 153, &c.)

Isaac Taylor says:—It is but faintly and afar off that the ancient liturgies (except so far as they merely copied their originals) come up to the majesty and the wide compass of the Hebrew worship, such as it is indicated in Ps. cxlviii. Neither Ambrose, nor Gregory, nor the Greeks have reached or approached this level; and in tempering the boldness of their originals by admixtures of what is more Christian-like and spiritual, the added elements sustain an injury which is not compensated by what they bring forward of a purer or less earthly kind: feeble indeed is the tone of these anthems of the ancient church; sophisticated or artificial in their style. Nor would it be possible—it has never yet seemed so—to christianize the Hebrew anthems, retaining their power, their earth-like richness, and their manifold splendours—which are the very splendours, and the true riches, and the grandeur of God's world—and withal attempered with expressions that touch to the quick the warmest human sympathies. And as the enhancement of all these, there is the *nationality*, there is that fire which is sure to kindle fire in true human hearts—

"He showeth his word unto Jacob,
His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
He hath not so dealt with any nation;
As for his judgments, they have not known them."

—*Perowne.*

O what a hymn of praise is here! It is a *universal chorus!* All created nature have a share, and all perform their respective parts.

All *intelligent beings* are especially called to praise him who made them in his love, and sustains them by his beneficence. *Man* particularly, in all the stages of his being—*infancy, youth, manhood,* and *old age:* all human beings have their peculiar interest in the great Father of the spirits of all flesh.

He loves *man*, wheresoever found,

of whatsoever colour, in whatever circumstances, and in all the stages of his pilgrimage, from his *cradle* to his *grave*.

Let the *lisp* of the *infant*, the *shout* of the *adult*, and the *sigh* of the *aged* ascend to the universal parent, as a gratitude offering. He guards those who *hang upon the breast;* controls and directs the headstrong and giddy, and sustains *old age* in its infirmities; and sanctifies to it the sufferings that bring on the termination of life.

Reader, this is thy God! How great, how good, how merciful, how compassionate! Breathe thy soul up to him; breathe it into him and let it be preserved in his bosom till mortality be swallowed up of life, and all that is imperfect be done away.

Jesus is thy sacrificial offering; Jesus is thy mediator. He has taken thy humanity, and placed it on the throne! He creates all things new; and faith in his blood will bring thee to his glory! Amen! Hallelujah!

The beautiful morning hymn of Adam and Eve (*Paradise Lost*, book v. line 153, &c.):—

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good; Almighty, thine this universal frame," &c.,

has been universally admired. How many have spoken loud in its praises who have never attempted to express their feelings in a stanza of Ps. cxlviii. But to the rapturous adorers of Milton's poetry what is the song of David, or this grand music of the spheres! Know this, O forgetful man, that *Milton's* Morning Hymn is a *paraphrase of this psalm*, and is indebted to it for every excellency it possesses. It is little else than the psalmist speaking in English instead of Hebrew verse.—*Adam Clarke.*

14. *He also exalteth the horn—a people near unto him.* While all the creatures before mentioned have abundant cause to praise God for his infinite perfection and his goodness to themselves, a peculiar obligation is incumbent on his people: first, for his distinguishing favour through all periods of their history; and then, for a special mercy recently experienced, namely, the restoration from captivity, now completed by the renewal of the temple and the reconstruction of the city walls. This restoration is described, by a favourite Davidic figure, as exalting or lifting up the horn of Israel. The previous condition of the chosen people might be well represented by the opposite figure used in Job xvi. 15. *Raised a horn for his people* seems to be only another way of saying *raised the horn of his people.* The first form of expression may have been here used for the purpose of assimilating this clause to the next, where *praise* is still dependent on the verb at the beginning, and *to raise up praise for his people* is to give them fresh occasion of still higher praise than they had ever yet been called to utter. The ancient church is here described in a fourfold manner: first, simply as *his people;* then, as *his saints*, or *gracious ones*, the objects of his mercy and the subjects of his grace; then, by their national title, as *the sons* (or *descendants*) *of Israel;* and lastly, as the *people near him, i.e.* nearer to him than all others, sustaining a more intimate relation to him. The same expression which is elsewhere applied to the priests (Lev. x. 3; Ezek. xlii. 13) is here applied to Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. xix. 6).—*Alexander.*

PSALM CXLIX.

7, 8. *To execute vengeance upon the heathen*, &c. This last phrase occurs also at the close of the preceding psalm. As *written* may mean written in the book of God's decrees, there is no need of supposing a reference to any part of Scripture. If there be such reference, however, it is no doubt to the threatening in Deut. xxxii. 41–43. To act as God's instruments in this great judicial process, so far from being a disgrace or hardship, is an honour reserved for all the objects of his mercy and subjects of his grace. The psalm ends as it began, with *Hallelujah!*

PSALM CL.

Composed probably by Ezra as a fitting conclusion to the Fifth Book of Psalms, and to the collection at large. This Fifth Book, unlike the preceding four books, has no formal doxology, which, as Dr. Binnie remarks, "may be due in part to the circumstance that there was no need of anything to mark the end of the last book; but it is still more satisfactorily accounted for by the character of Ps. cl. It is, in effect, a doxology from beginning to end. For not only does it begin and end with *Hallelujah*, but every one of the intermediate lines is an exhortation to *Praise the Lord.*"

Hengstenberg's beautiful remark is often quoted—"As the life and the history of the church, so also the Psalter,

with all its cries from the depths, runs out in a hallelujah."

3–6. *Praise him with the sound of trumpet. . . . Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.* Wherewith? With every instrument—with trumpet, psaltery, harp, soft timbrel, pipe, stringed instruments, and wind-instruments; with cymbals, softly played (שָׁמַע, that do not overpower the voice of the singer); and with cymbals of jubilee (2 Sam. vi. 5). Not merely an instrument of ten strings, as at other times, but ten distinct instruments are called for; and twelve times is the call uttered, "Praise ye!" Twelve times; so that each tribe is summoned, and then all the universe besides, to use their voice.

"*Let every thing that hath breath praise Jehovah!*" All creation is summoned to take part, and angels too, for they have interest in our redemption-scenes —since he is "to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. i. 20).

What magnificence and majesty in this close! Praise gathered in from every creature; every instrument of joy, and gladness, and triumph, and jubilee summoned to sound loud praise; and every heart and voice engaged to help the choir. "Every voice teems with praise; every thought is about praise; every object awakens it; every power uses itself for his service" (*Meditat. on Psalms*).

We close the book with something of the feeling with which we suppose John came away from hearing "the voice of much people in heaven saying Hallelujah!" We seem to have been brought within hearing of heavenly melody, from heavenly harps and voices. Is not the closing verse taken up in Rev. v. 13—"And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" And again, in Rev. xix. 6, 7, when the great multitude, with voice "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings," cry "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come!" —*A. A. Bonar.*